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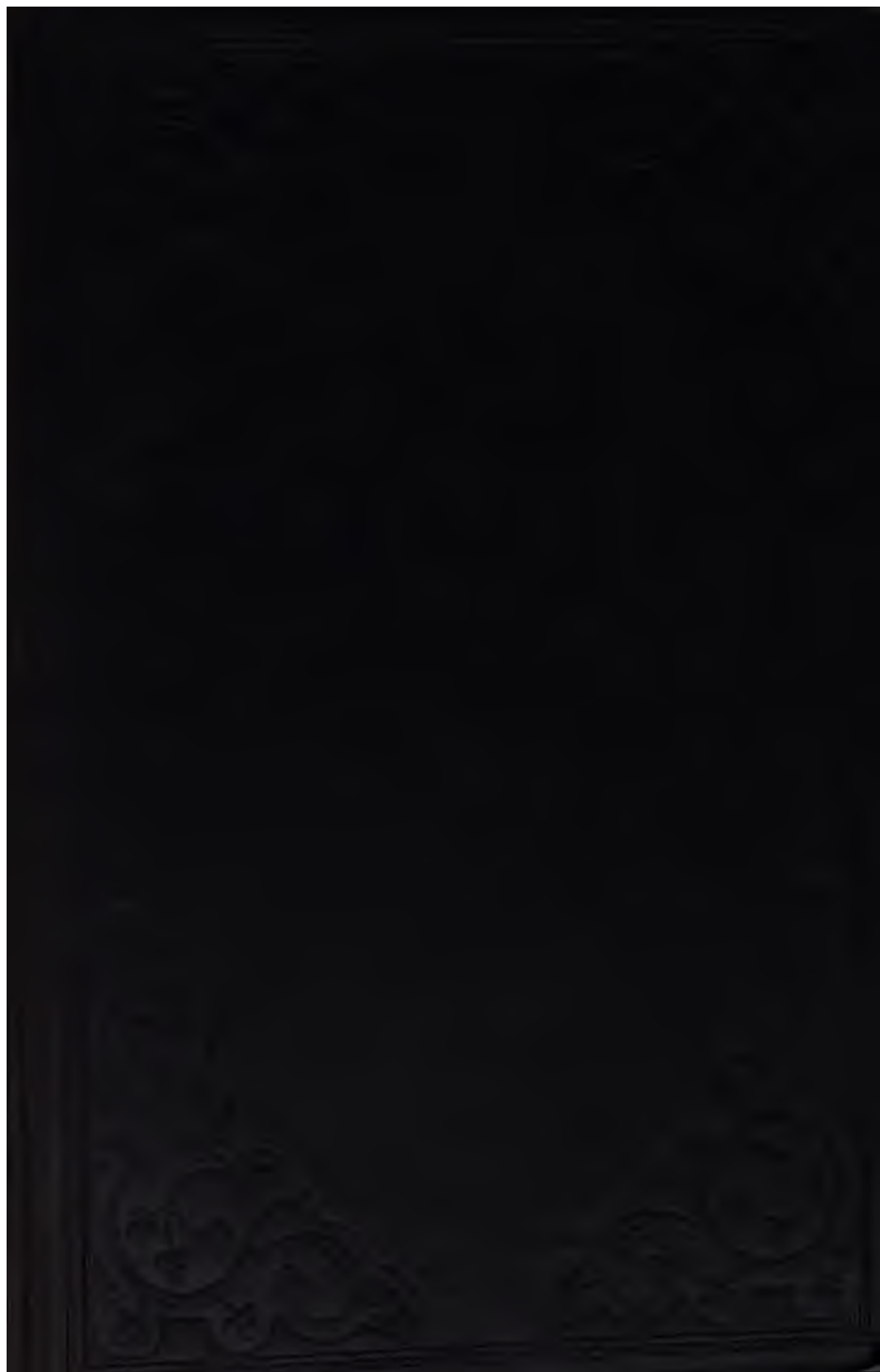
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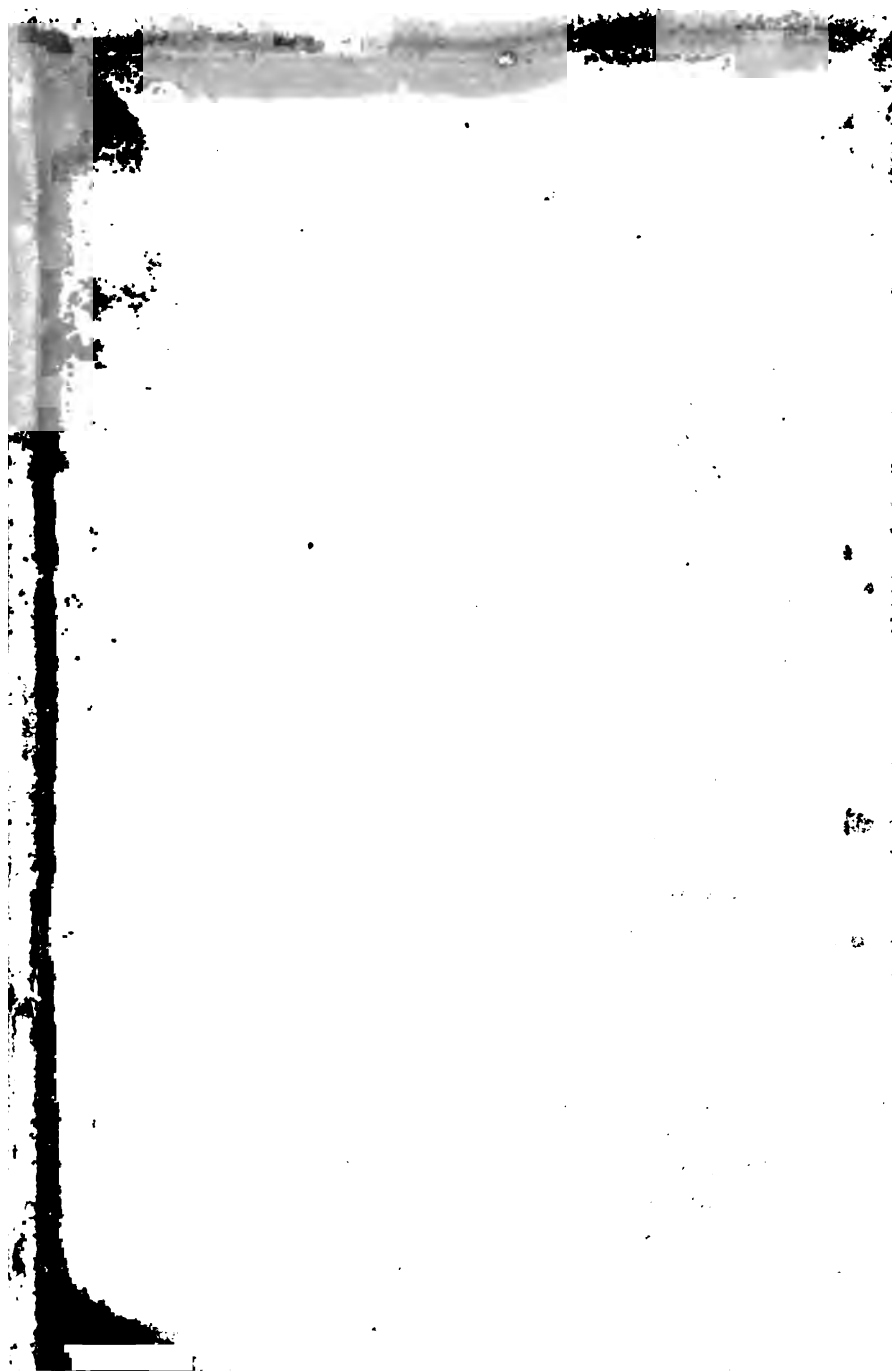
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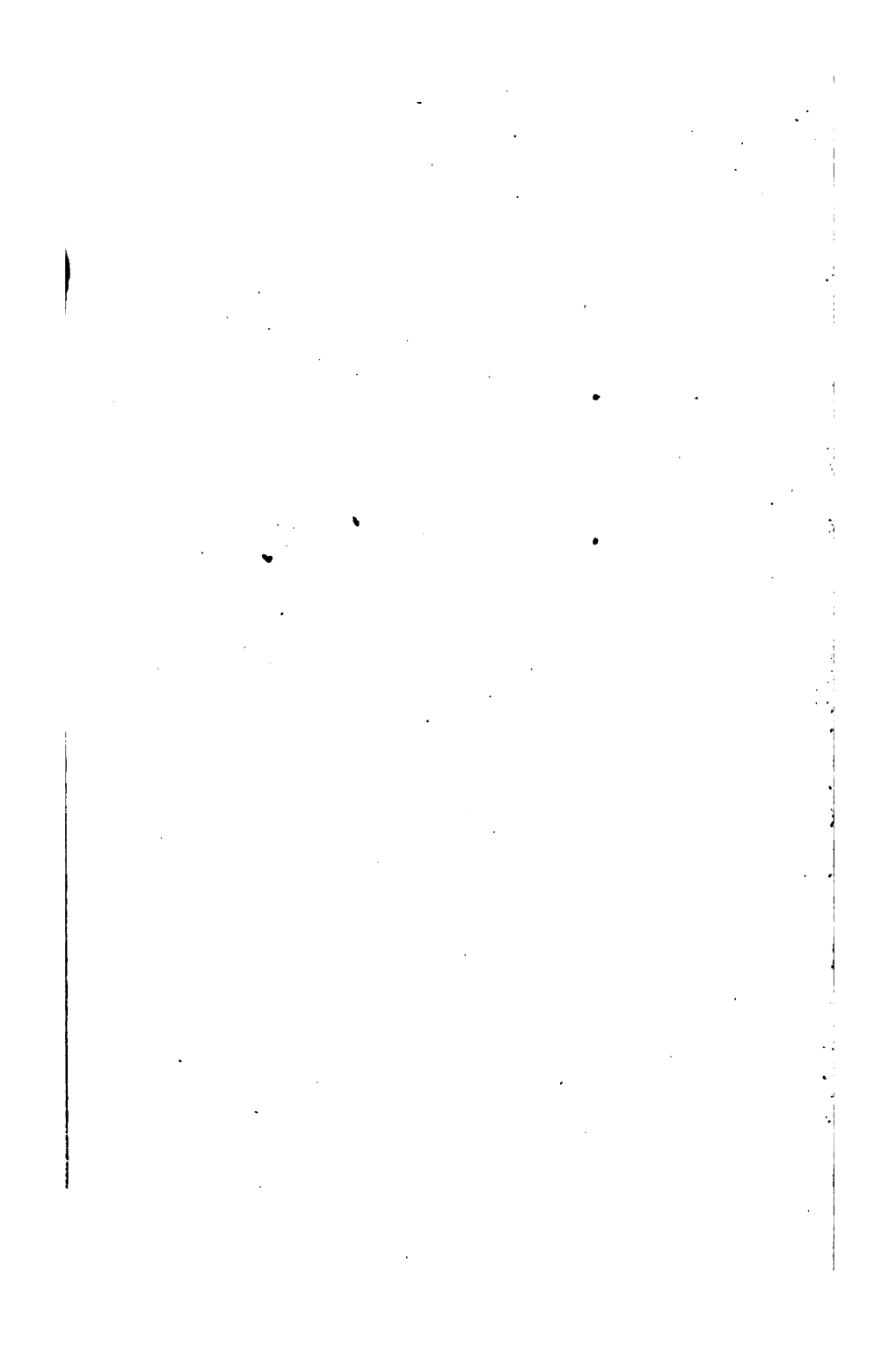




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SPIRITUAL UNFOLDINGS

FROM

The Word of Life.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE following pages are, substantially, lectures delivered in my Parish and elsewhere. God has already blessed them to some, and I send them forth to the Press, in the humble and prayerful hope that they may prove a blessing to others.

There is much in them, I am aware, with which a critical eye may find fault. But they are not written for criticism, or they should have been written very differently. I have written them for the *heart* rather than for the *head*, and I commit them, with all their defects, to the Press, with the earnest prayer that they may not miss their design. He who condescends to make use of "the weak things of the world and base things of the world" for His glory, may, in His own sovereign grace, make use of these. If He do so in *one* instance only, my object in publishing them will be accomplished, and I shall have reaped a rich reward.

My single aim throughout has been to set Christ before men as the "all in all." God forbid that, as a *minister* of Christ, I should take up my pen for any other purpose. I would set Christ forward to meet every want of the soul as

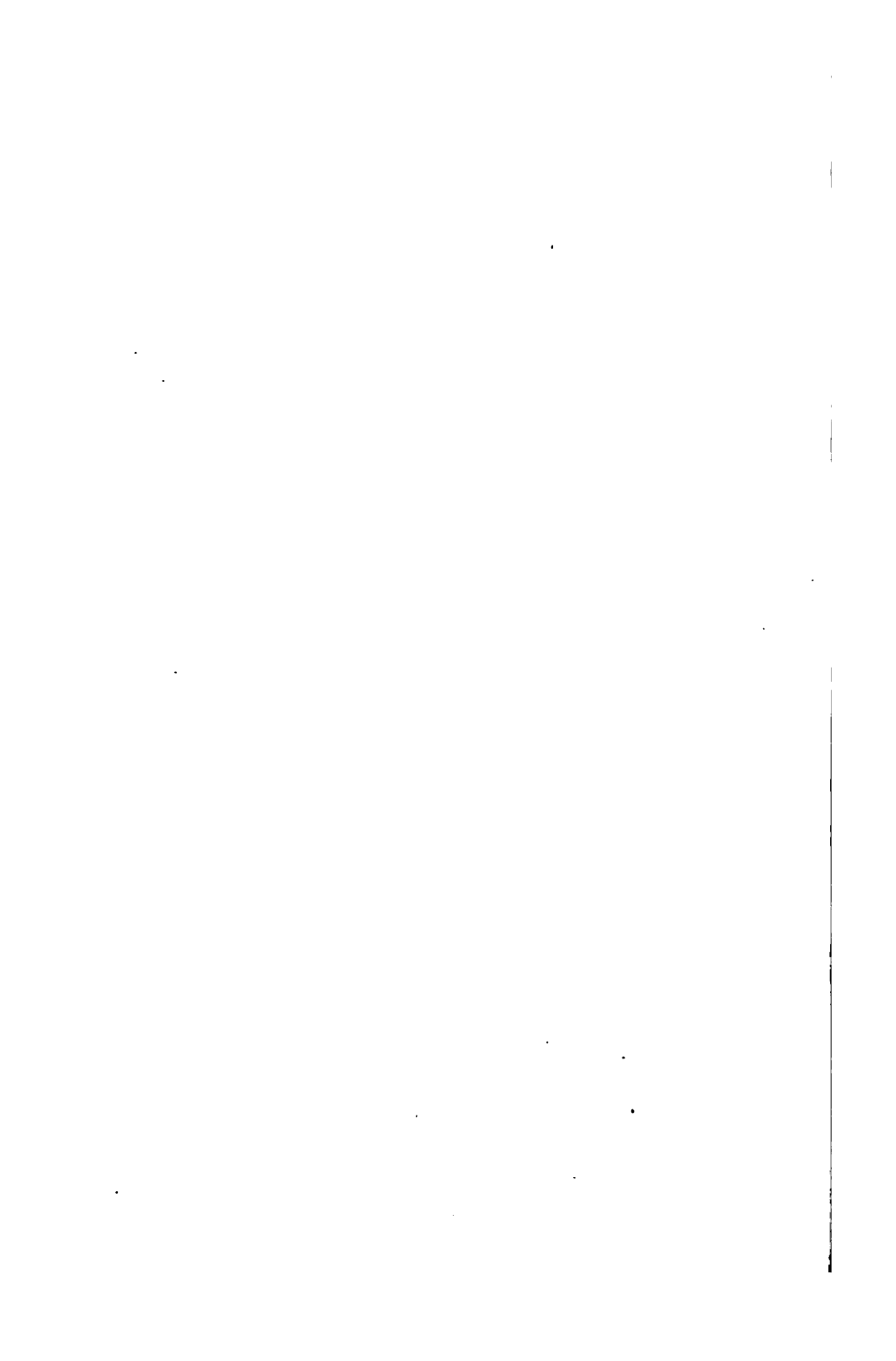
well as every form of error. I am fully persuaded that nothing else will effectually meet either the one or the other. I am equally persuaded that this will. The mists of error that have risen up, and which may yet rise up, in the Church or out of it, will all disperse before the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Only let us be true to the Saviour and to His Word, and that Word will triumph. If we look back at the history of the Church, at the heresies which have rent it asunder, and the darkness which has eventually draped its spiritual horizon, we cannot fail to trace it to one cause—unfaithfulness to Christ, and to the simple truth as it is in Jesus. When the Sun descends, darkness must come over nature, and the traveller will stumble. Let us lovingly, but faithfully and fearlessly, set forth the Light. Let us, “in season and out of season,” hold up Christ and Christ alone. Let us determine with one of old “to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” and we need not fear the issue.

The times in which we live are very solemn. Errors of the most fearful kind are abroad on every side. Iniquity is stalking through the land with gigantic strides. Crimes unheard of and unconceived, are daily transpiring through the columns of the Press, appalling the mind and making the heart to tremble. Satan seems let loose among men, knowing that his time is short. “Iniquity abounds, and the love of many is waxing cold.” Who can mistake their

interpretation? "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." It is at hand—even at the very door. Let us be watchful, and like faithful sentinels, at the post of duty. Let us be true to our absent Lord. Ours is no uncertain warfare. Ours are no untried weapons. We know of no watchword but "victory." And the time is at hand when the shout shall be heard that shall make the walls of Jericho fall to the ground; when error of every kind, iniquity and sin, and everything that opposeth itself to God, shall be scattered to the four winds of heaven. "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

*The Parsonage,
Kirkby Ravensworth,
Near Richmond,
Yorkshire.*

December 1862.



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JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.

1ST JOHN XXXV. TO END.

THE most ordinary mind is arrested by objects that are striking. To recognize the hand of God in the jewelled heavens, or the mighty ocean; to trace it in the grand arcana of nature around; to acknowledge it in the wasting pestilence, or the sweeping famine, or in some overwhelming and crushing calamity of daily life, men are not unwilling, nor do they find much difficulty in doing so. These things force themselves on the mind without much effort. The most obtuse cannot fail to understand; the most reluctant are compelled to pause and reflect. The light shines too brightly for the darkest vision; the voice of God rings too loudly for the deafest ear; the conviction becomes too powerful for the most rebellious will.

To rest satisfied, however, with this knowledge, is not the mark of one of God's intelligent creatures. He who does so, is not fulfilling the great end of his creation. He is not turning to account the talent which God has given him. To examine, to search diligently, to weigh carefully, to prove satisfactorily, and to turn to good account the results of our labours, is what God enjoins upon us. This marks the loftier intellect, the more exalted mind, and the nobler character. To trace the finger of God in what would escape the notice of the ordinary mind; to read the message of God and listen to

the whisper of His Spirit in what the superficial observer would pass by, or would call ordinary and common-place—this marks the one desirous to advance in the knowledge of God, and to own Him in all things. Such a one feels that there is no medium too trifling through which God may not, nay does not reveal Himself to man; that there is nothing above, around, or below, that does not unfold something of God's glorious character. From the lowliest insect that gilds the evening air, or the monad that swims unseen in the ocean's drop, or the leaf that falls unnoticed on the pathless waste, up to the high and glorious being that veils its face before the throne of the Eternal—all have a voice; all have a message to man; all are radiant as the sunbeam. God is in all, speaking in all, is glorified in all. "All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints bless Thee."

It is the same with regard to God's written Word. There are truths in it so plain, so palpable, so striking, that they force themselves without difficulty and without reluctance on the most superficial reader. They shine with transparent lustre on the very surface so that "the wayfaring man and the fool cannot err therein." At times they will arrest the most callous, the most careless and unthinking. It requires no effort to discover them; no additional light to perceive them. There they are, and if we look at all we cannot fail to perceive. It is not the mark of a mind desirous to advance in the knowledge of God, however, to rest satisfied with such knowledge as this. It delights to "*search* the Scriptures," to dive beneath the surface and bring to light its hidden treasures, to open the matchless and inexhaustible mine and bear away its hidden gems. And it finds them where the ordinary reader would least anticipate, and in what the superficial reader would altogether overlook. It

traces them in type and ceremony, in parable and symbol, in the conversation and the journey, in the incident and the accident, yea often, the most precious truth and practical wrapped up within the folds of a single word. Such a mind judges naturally and correctly that there is *nothing* in that Word that was not designed by the Holy Spirit to unfold God's glorious character, and to exalt the Redeemer; that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished to all good works." Thus the believer who would advance in the divine life searches diligently, frequently, and prayerfully, ever keeping the Saviour before his eyes, and reading that Word with only one end in view—to see His image reflected in everything.

Let us read this portion of God's Word with this purpose, and endeavour to learn from it something that will exalt the Saviour, and instruct our own souls.

John the Baptist was a minister of Christ. He is introduced to our notice at the very opening of the Gospel dispensation, as an example of what every minister of Christ ought to be. As to the minister himself, there is no putting forward any undue pretensions to sacredness of character; no parade, no pomp, no display; nothing to strike the beholder, or awe the ignorant. He proclaims his mission in few and simple words, "I am the *voice* of one crying in the wilderness." Mark the humility of the true ambassador for Christ. Mark how he hides himself in order the more effectually to fulfil his work—"to prepare the way of the Lord." He is only a *voice* in the wilderness. He seems to say, "I am not to be *seen* but to be *heard*. Look not at me but at Him who is before me.

Let me be hidden. Let me be nothing, but *hear* my message — ‘Behold the Lamb of God.’” No wonder that God honours such testimonies as his. We are not surprised to hear that the Spirit of God set His seal so remarkably on this man’s ministry. We are prepared to hear that “there went out to him *Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan*, and were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” It is such a testimony that God has promised to honour. It is such a minister who will gather sheaves into the garner. It is when man retires into the shade, when he strives to lose himself in Jesus, that the Spirit of God honours the testimony of his lips. But this posture is absolutely necessary to the success of the minister of Christ. The exaltation of the creature to any extent only tarnishes what is of God. God will not give His glory to another. If the way of the Lord is to be prepared—to be made straight; if God’s work is to be effectually done; then God *must* be all, and man *must* be nothing. One touch of creature glory mingled with that work tarnishes all its excellence; “the silver becomes dross, and the fine gold becomes dim.” Nor does God honour this minister’s *work* merely. He honours the *man* too. John makes little of himself; God makes much of him. John calls himself “a *voice* in the wilderness;” God calls him “a burning and a shining light,” and says of him, “Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a *greater*.” Why this honour put upon him and his work? Why this exaltation from the lips of God Himself? O minister of Christ, learn the reason; —he was little in his own eyes! His single eye was to hide himself that Christ should be all in all. Believer in Jesus, labouring in the vineyard of your heavenly Master, ponder this deeply. Would you be honoured? Would

you be blessed in your work? Would you have the seal of the Spirit in every footprint of your path? Would you have the smile of heaven and the approbation of God Himself?—then aim to be like this minister of Christ. Aim to hide yourself. Strive to be nothing that Christ may be all. Let not thoughts or words of *self* tarnish the glory of your Master. Mingle no alloy with the fine gold. Let your cry be “I am but a voice in the wilderness; I am but a reed shaken with the wind; I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of my Saviour’s feet.” I am *nothing*; Saviour, be thou *all*!

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide *myself* in *Thee*.”

Ah! how much there is in the best of us of this burning of incense to the idol self. If God gives us more grace than another, if He enables us to proclaim the truth boldly and effectually, if He sets the seal of His Spirit in any measure on our labours, how we tarnish it all with self-adulation! How complacently we view ourselves in relation to the work! How soon those with whom we mingle know that *we* have done it! And, in relating any account of God’s work, how stealthily the narration of *our own* creeps in! Oh! how the leaven secretly works in the measures of meal! What fools do we make of ourselves in the sight of God, and often in the sight of His people too! God keep us from this treacherous foe that lurks beside all our duties, that hides itself in our most secret chambers, and that follows us on our very knees before God! God keep us from this idol self!

But let not the minister of Christ forget that he is “a voice.” He is, it is true, in the wilderness. He is in a desert waste. The world has no green pastures for the soul

to feed upon. It has no sunny spot where the heart can rest and be satisfied. It has no well of living water to refresh the traveller's thirsty spirit. On every side man is a prey to devouring beasts. It is a wilderness. In that wilderness the soul has lost its way, and the minister of Christ is "a voice," and seems to say, "I have something to tell the wandering ones around me: I have found the way: I have discovered the *right* track—"Behold the Lamb of God!" This is the sum and substance of what that voice is to utter. This is the simple heaven-sent message that is to fall from his lips. It is Christ simply, Christ clearly, Christ savingly, Christ exclusively—the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending of all things. Let the ambassador for Christ never forget this. He is a voice in the wilderness, a finger-post on the world's highway to direct the traveller to Jesus. When he neglects to do this—when, instead of directing the sinner to Christ for pardon he directs him to the priest, when, instead of pointing him to the blood of Jesus for cleansing he points him to the waters of baptism, or to the rites and rituals, ordinances and ceremonies of the Church, then has Satan turned the finger-post, and given to that voice an uncertain sound. Then has that man mistaken his calling. His message, whatever else it may be, however excellent according to human judgment, will not be honoured of God. It were better for him that he held his peace. It were better for him that that voice had never been heard—yea, better for him that he himself had never been born. A sorer punishment than all others will his be who has held for years the holy *office* of a minister of Christ, but who has not been a Christ-preaching, Christ-exalting, Christ-honouring, Christ-living minister.

But to return to the narrative. Let us notice another instructive lesson. "Again the next day John stood, and two of his disciples, and *looking upon Jesus as He walked*, he saith, "Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, *and they followed Jesus.*" What is the important lesson we may learn from this?—that just as John looked at Jesus *himself*, was he able to speak of Him effectually to others. Then only was he able to say with divine power in his words, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Herein, too, lay the simple explanation of the blessing which so eminently attended his ministry. Herein, also, lay the secret source of his humility. Yes, here is the source of all our own individual blessing as well as our usefulness to others—"looking unto Jesus." It requires something more than evangelical preaching to reach the heart. The truth as it is in Jesus may be faithfully and earnestly proclaimed; it may be clothed in its most attractive garb; yet will all be to no purpose unless there be in the one who proclaims it, a "looking unto Jesus" himself. There must be this, or all our preaching and speaking will fall powerless on the ear. There must be this, or the heart of the speaker will be inflated with pride, if God gives it any measure of success. There must be this, or self will in some measure tarnish all God's work. There must be this, or there will be no deep spirituality of mind, no holy, heavenly walk with God, no unction of the Spirit on our lips, or in our lives. There must be this before man can be an ambassador for Christ; and without this, he can be no ambassador at all. "Looking unto Jesus"—here is our strength for every emergency, our armour in every warfare, our victory in every conflict. Looking in sin, looking in sorrow, looking in joy. Look-

ing daily, looking hourly, looking at all times. This makes us strong when we are weak, mighty when we are feeble, and conquerors when all things are against us here. No eye that was ever uplifted to that Saviour fainted in the strife. No bosom that ever laid its sorrows on Him was ever overborne with care. This is the panacea for depressing anxiety, for bitter disappointment, and for crushing sorrow. This is the heavenly balsam that will calm the fretting uneasiness that preys upon the heart from the little vexations and crosses and trials of each hour's daily life. Try the world's opiates if you will, but you will find rest only here. Drown them in pleasure or in sin if you will, but you will only sharpen their edge, and fix their fangs deeper in your soul,—rest is only here. Let business or the engrossing concerns of daily life cheat them into temporary oblivion if you will, but there they are, and will be, till you turn and look to Christ—rest is only here. And to look unto Jesus you need not withdraw from the throng; you need not leave your accustomed place at the fireside, the market, or the shop; you need not shut yourself up in your closet, or retire from the observation of men. What are your *leisure thoughts*? Whither do the desires and affections of your heart prompt *them*? Can they not wing their way to Jehovah's throne? Can they not be often within the veil? Can they not look unto Jesus and draw down pardon and peace, strength and victory? Then gird up the reins of your mind. Let them not be frittered away in dreamy vacancy. At the fire-side, or in the street; in the closet, or amongst the busy haunts of men, send upwards your leisure thoughts to Him. Ask for a heart ever ready to turn to Him in prayer; for a spirit ever bent on intercourse with heaven; and to find in

Him your continued resource, your perfect rest, and your full enjoyment.

Ministers of Christ, as you proclaim the gospel to others, as you invite the sinner to "behold the Lamb of God," see that you behold Him yourself. Speak *for* Him with your eye fixed *on* Him. Drink deeply of His Spirit. Empty yourself daily at His cross. Then will your words enter the hearts of your hearers, and they too will "follow Jesus."

But mark how quickly the Lord notices the first step that is taken towards Him. "Then Jesus turned and saw them following." We cannot take a step towards the Saviour but He notices it. The first motion or feeling of the heart after God, the first tear of repentance that moistens the eye, the first yearnings of the soul after that rest which Jesus only can give—all are noticed by Him. His eye is upon us, and His countenance towards us, to encourage us onward. He marked the prodigal's first footstep towards the Father's house, even "while he was yet a great way off." He saw the tempter at the side of Peter, and had thrown around the helpless disciple the shield of His intercession, when he knew it not. His eye penetrated the thick darkness that had gathered around the little band of disciples, as they toiled amid the waves and billows of Tiberias, and He came quickly to their rescue. He saw Nathanael under the fig tree, and Zacchæus in the sycamore. Graven upon His heart are all His saints. Shielded by His love, protected by His arm, and guided by His counsel, is the weakest and feeblest of the flock. Nor themselves only, but their *circumstances* also. There is nothing too small, nothing too trifling in the history of His beloved child. The hairs of the head are all numbered, the sparrows on the housetop are not forgotten. Say not, then, trembling penitent,

or tried and perplexed child of God, "My way is hid from my God." Hear the answer of the Lord, "Can a woman forget her sucking child? yea, she *may* forget, yet will not I forget thee." O soul of little faith, "wait thou only upon God. They that wait on the Lord shall never be ashamed. They shall mount up with eagle's wings," though prostrated to the earth with the blasts of trial. "They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not be faint."

O Believer, what a precious Saviour is thine! What grace flows down from Him to encourage thee onward through this vale of sorrow! Precious grace! that throws around thee its almighty pavilion. Precious grace! that marks the faintest breath of His Spirit in the soul, and sheds upon it the light of His approving countenance. Precious grace! that quickens our feeble halting footsteps and bids us follow Him, while He never leaves our side till the journey is over and we are safely sheltered in our Father's dwelling. Such was Jesus of old, and such is He still to all His saints.

Reader, have *you* listened to the voice of the Spirit calling upon you to "Behold the Lamb of God?" Are you one into whose heart has entered, for the first time, some faint desire to follow the Saviour? Oh! cherish it as your choicest mercy! It is the first pulsation of life in your soul. It is the first breath of God's Holy Spirit over the valley of dry bones within you. It may be feeble—it may only be a *misgiving* darting like a flash of lightning through your mind—a solemn thought or feeling after God—yet is it truly an emanation of the Holy Spirit. Oh! let it lead you to the Mercy-seat. Go and shut yourself up in your closet. Ask the Lord to quicken the spark into a flame. Ask Him

to revive His work within you. Ask Him for the broken heart, the contrite spirit, the godly sorrow working repentance not to be repented of. Ask Him earnestly, believingly, confidently. Let nothing keep you back or lead you to defer it to another season. Go when the feeling comes over your mind, when the desire enters your soul. Break through every barrier! cast aside every pretext! banish every other consideration! and haste to the mercy-seat. That messenger may not return to thy soul again to invite thee. It may depart from thee for ever, and leave thee alone to perish in thy sins!

"And Jesus said unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see." We may notice the action of the Lord here as instructive to ourselves. The Saviour was journeying onward. Two who were as yet strangers to Him, hear and receive into their hearts the testimony of the minister of Christ, and follow Him. He sees them following, and turning towards them says, "What seek ye?" They desire to know His abiding place. The Saviour says, "Come and see." Thus He ever speaks to all those who, like the disciples here, desire to know Him fully. "Come and see." "Come and *walk with me; travel in company with me.*"

If we would know Jesus fully and abide with Him hereafter, we must walk *with* Him now. It is only as we walk with any one in companionship that we can truly know them; and it is only as we walk with Jesus in living and abiding communion that we can know Him. That *introduction* to the Saviour which so many Christians satisfy themselves with in the first reception of the Gospel, is not what the Lord sets before us in His Word. What the Saviour

seeks now, as then, is companionship, fellowship, communion. Our first belief of the truth and acceptance of that Saviour as ours is only the first step in a walk *with* God till we reach His dwelling-place. And, like the disciples here, we know not *where* He dwells, nor do we know the *way*, except as we walk *with* Him. "We know not whither thou goest and how can we know the way," said one of old. "*I am the way, the truth, and the life,*" was the Lord's reply. We have to walk by *faith* as they had. Losing sight of Him we are lost. Wandering away from His side we miss the track. Walking at a distance from Him we miss the counsel, the comfort, the fellowship, and the upholding strength of His outstretched arm. With our eye off Him we are not safe for a moment. Nearness to God, and *continued* nearness, is our only place of happiness, as well as our only place of safety.

Nor are we left to *choose* our path. The path is His. It may be, and it will be a path of sorrow, for He has said it. It is one of certain tribulation, for He has assured us we shall have it. To follow Him without taking up the *cross* is simply impossible. Before one step in that path can be taken, we must take up the cross with the calm conviction that we are to carry it all the way. The Shepherd cannot take one path and the sheep another. The Saviour cannot take one way and His follower another. The way must be His, and His only. To reach the dwelling you must go where He leads—over the rough place and over the smooth—across the mountain and over the hill—through the swelling flood and down into the dark valley. But blessed thought! in such a journey we are not alone. He travels with us every step, and never leaves our side for a moment. Our way may be through "waters" of affliction,

"rivers" of sorrow, and "flames" of trial, yet is He in each, sharing the heart's burdens, and drinking its bitter cup. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Then, beloved brother or sister, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is trying you, as though some *strange* thing happened unto you, but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." If your past years have been comparatively easy, prosperous, and happy, so far as *this* life is concerned, there is much reason to fear that you have been walking in *another* path than Christ's, or that you have been walking *at a distance* from God. You have not been walking *with* Jesus to the dwelling. The Shepherd's eye has seen the sheep at a distance, and He has brought it nearer to Him. He has brought it into His path—the path of sorrow, it is true—but the path of safety and nearness to Him. He saw you in *danger* at a distance, and His love brought you back again. Beloved, it is well! God's dealings are all right, and *soon* you will say so. Your beauteous landscape may be draped, your fairest and loveliest flower may have been plucked, your choicest blessing may have been doomed to perish before your eyes, "your crown and your glory may have been stripped, and your way hedged up that you cannot pass." Be it so, beloved—all is well. God's way is always right. It was *needful*, depend upon it. Had you not had it, the next step might have been a plunge over the brink. Oh, it is well! Look up; and though with tears falling thickly from thine eyes, strive to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

"If Thou shouldst call me to resign
 What most I prize—it ne'er was mine!
 I only yield Thee what was Thine;
 Thy will be done!

Renew my will from day to day,
 Blend it with Thine; and take away
 All that now makes it hard to say,

Thy will be done!"

"So they came and saw where He dwelt, and *abode* with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." These disciples had followed the Saviour, had walked in company with Him, and those who walk with Him have no desire to turn back. Perhaps, like the disciples journeying to Emmaus, "their hearts burned within them while He talked with them by the way." To *abide* with Him with whom they had walked in company was only the natural desire of the heart. It is ever thus with those who follow the Saviour and walk with God. They have no desire to turn back. They love His company. They love His dwelling-place. Where He is, there would they delight to be. It may be a hovel, a garret, or a dungeon, but if He is there their hearts are at home with Him. They are drawn, and cannot but run after Him. Like Peter on the Mount they are ready to say, "Lord, it is good to be here." Who that has ever travelled in company with Jesus but would not always be there. It is a blessed and holy place. It is the expanding gate of heaven. It is fulness of joy; for heaven is where Jesus is, and where He is not, though all else were there, yet is it the gloom of desolation and the darkness of despair. "And they abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." Night was at hand, and where could they dwell so securely or so happily as with Him. Darkness was about to spread over the earth its

sable mantle, but *there* all was light, for Jesus was there. Danger might be abroad and foes of every kind, but here all was safety. Under His protection what foe could touch them? Under the shadow of His roof who or what could harm them? "The Lord of hosts was with them, the God of Jacob was their refuge." Under such circumstances the believer's unvarying language is,

"Here would I ever stay!
Perishing things of clay,
Pass from my heart away,
Jesus is mine!"

Reader, it may be the tenth hour of time's fleeting day with you. Declining years may be casting their long dark shadows in your path—all telling you that your earthly sun is near its setting. The buoyancy and freshness of youth have passed away, and the strength and vigour of manhood have yielded to time's destructive march. O, dear aged friend, as you stand on the borders of the eternal world, suffer a fellow traveller to eternity to speak with you! Under whose roof have *you* taken refuge? Have *you* travelled through life in company with Jesus? Is your soul taking shelter within the clefts of the Rock of Ages? Is your *heart* at home with Jesus, washed from its sins in His most precious blood, covered with His robe of spotless righteousness? Or is it still in the desert waste, without a beacon light to guide you through the gloom, or a refuge from the blackness of darkness that is gathering around you. Oh, for the hoary head to be standing on the borders of eternity, and yet a votary to this world's pleasures; contented with a doubtful "may be," or "hope" of an interest in another, is truly awful! With the judgment seat of Christ in view, and with the terrible conviction of a

righteous retribution at hand for a lifetime's rejection of God—and yet unsaved! Oh, this is terrible! My dear aged friend, is this thy state at the tenth hour of life's brief day? Soon you will have to enter alone the dark valley. Soon your feet must feel the cold swellings of the Jordan, and you, a disembodied spirit, must confront your offended Judge. Earnestly would I beseech you to pause and reflect on your awful condition! Oh! give not sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eye-lids till you have cast yourself at the feet of Christ, and laid hold of the refuge for sinners. Break through every barrier, and delay not! Seize the rushing moments of the brief period of time still remaining to you, to know that Saviour for your own soul in whose presence you will so shortly stand! Rest not, I entreat you, till by faith you behold those sins of yours laid on Him; till that soul of yours has been cleansed from its guilt in His most precious blood; and till you can say, the Saviour is *mine*, and I am *His*! I charge you by all the terrors of that day to awake from your earthly slumber! Arouse yourself from your carnal sleep, and flee *now* to Christ, that you lose not your own soul!

But let us pass on to the narrative, and notice one or two other instructive features in it. "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth *his own brother* Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias. And *he brought him to Jesus.*"

And we may notice first, that it is when we have been *walking with Jesus ourselves, and abiding with Him* as Andrew had been, that we come forth from His presence with the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and on our lips to draw others to Him too. Andrew came forth from

the presence of Jesus and went to speak of Him to others, and his testimony was blessed. Philip had been in company with Jesus and went forth from His presence, to testify of Him to Nathanael, and his testimony was also blessed. Oh, who that ever comes forth from *that* presence to do anything, but all they do is blessed! We cannot go there and leave as we went. We cannot spend our time there and not come forth, like Moses from the presence of God, with the reflection of God upon us. We cannot come forth from that dwelling-place, to work "hour after hour upon a needy world," without a blessing; and the reason our testimony falls so often powerless on the ear, and in all our labours we leave so few

"Footprints in the sands of time,"

is because we are so little there. We are so much with the world, so little with Jesus. So much with one another, so little with God. So much within the atmosphere of earth and earthly things; so little within the veil, in communion with the Invisible. No wonder there is so much of an earthly spirit about us! No wonder that the tone of our daily life scarcely rises above the level of the world! No wonder that we retain the defilement of the world so long on our souls, that it works its way into the texture of our spiritual being, so as to become a part of our very nature, even in the presence of God! Can we marvel? "Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled?" Are we so ignorant of the true character of this present world as to expect anything else? Is not every influence that plays upon our spiritual nature in each hour of the day, drawing a film between the soul and God? Does not the malaria enter the soul through the eyes and ears, and through every inlet of the senses, palsying the inner life of God, and leaving

its serpent-trail behind which nothing but the presence of Jesus can eradicate? Oh that we were fully alive to the true character of the scene in which we daily mingle! That we saw it not as we do, "through a glass darkly," but in the clear unsullied light of God's Holy presence. Then should we feel as we ought to feel, that outside of that presence, the soul is not safe for a moment.

And in nothing is the effect of the absence of communion with God more perceived, than in our labours for Christ. There is the beaten path of parish duties long and regularly trodden. There is religious activity, bustle, and excitement; the preaching, the prayer meeting, the class meeting; the running from one scene of religious excitement to another: but oh, how little of the spirit of the sanctuary is carried about us into these scenes! How little about us that *arrests*—that speaks for Christ far more than fluency of speech, sound doctrines, or clear views! Can we wonder if we "look for much and bring forth little!" Oh, one hour spent with Jesus will carry into the world more power along with it than days or weeks of religious activity and excitement, and is of more value in the cause of Christ than all the "clear views" and sound doctrines enunciated from the lips of the most eloquent on earth! It is in these days of activity and bustle, when Christians are relying so much on combined action and religious effort, that the voice of the Lord may be heard speaking to us—"Prove me now *herewith*, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing." Yes, here is the source of all our power, the secret of all our success in the cause of Christ—*walking* with God—*abiding* with Jesus. From the dwelling-place of Jesus the Spirit of God will ever accompany us; but He will not go with us from any

other. Oh, reader, may we ever remember this, and may that dwelling-place be ours! There is our spiritual armour. There are our spiritual weapons; and there, too, is the strength to use them. He who goes forth to the conflict from that presence goes forth to certain victory.

Let us also notice, in passing, to whom Andrew *first* carries his message. "He first findeth *his own brother* Simon." Andrew went not first to the multitude to make known the Saviour, but to his own family. To them we are bound by every tie of nature and grace to *first* make known the glad tidings of salvation. To go forward in the zeal of recent conversion to preach to the multitude, while a brother or sister, a husband or wife, is allowed to continue day after day in sin, or indifferent to the state of their soul, is surely culpable in the highest degree. In such a case is there not underneath all our zeal, a latent desire to stand well with the church or with the world, or to pass for one in interesting spiritual circumstances, rather than any real anxiety for the salvation of souls. Alas, in the present day, we need this warning; for under cover of uncommon zeal in the cause of Christ, there is often lurking in the heart this remnant of the old nature. That concern which we express is not awakened at the thought of a near relative's state. They are allowed to go on, from year to year, unreprieved, unwarned, unprayed for. Are we *really* so anxious about the souls of others when those at our own door are uncared for? That it is a cross, and often no light one, to speak of Christ to our own immediate relatives, cannot be denied. We have less to contend with in preaching to the multitude, and much that may flatter the undetected vanity of our hearts. They cannot taunt us with the cutting reproach "practice what you preach;" and because of this cross we

shrink from the responsibility, and let them alone in their sins! But here is the true test of our Christian character. The *cross* is what is laid upon us from the first moment of our conversion to God. Are we willing to take it up, or to escape from it, under cover of something more gratifying to the vanity of our natural hearts? Oh that we ever remembered, that the taking up of the Saviour's daily cross is far more acceptable to Him than all our self-undertaken labours in His service, and is a far truer test of our spiritual state before God. "Go home to *thine own house*," said the Saviour to one who had been brought to his right mind, "and shew *them* what great things God hath done for thee." And so would we say to many an earnest young convert, desiring to make known the Saviour to others, yet scarcely instructed in the things of God himself,—go home to that brother or sister still unconcerned about their own state before God; to that father or mother whose hoar hairs are still found amid the vanities of a world quickly passing from under their feet; or to that neighbour still living in carelessness and sin—go home and shew *them* what great things God hath done for *you*.

Reader, have you heard the glad sound of redeeming love? Do you love the Saviour, and does His love constrain you to speak of Him to others? Have you no relatives still unconverted? Can you not go to *them* and say, "*I have found the Messiah*"—"Come and see?" Do you write no letter to them in which you might say one earnest word for Christ, or press the loving invitation, "Come and see?" Look around you, and before you complain that you have no opportunity of doing good, see those opportunities lying thick on every side. Be earnest! Speak to them! Draw them with intreaties! Win them with love! Ask for

strength and wisdom to enable you to do so, and rest not satisfied till it can be said of you with regard to *your* relative, as is here said of Andrew—"And he *brought him* to Jesus."

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, follow me." We cannot but notice how absolute and immediate is God's claim upon us. No apology or explanation is here offered. No time is allowed to deliberate and decide. No plea of excuse is permitted to be put forward. No; the command is unequivocal, "Follow me." It is thus God ever speaks to us. He finds each one of us, just as He found Philip, engaged in our worldly callings or duties, occupied with our domestic endearments, our household claims, our daily pleasures and enjoyments, and says, "Follow me." His claim upon us is paramount to every other consideration, and admits of no excuse. "In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him," is God's unvarying language. "Follow me," is written in legible characters over each calling, each duty, each pleasure, each act and deed of life. We are not permitted to plead, "Let me *first* go and bury my father," needful and urgent as that may seem. We are not allowed "first to go and bid farewell to them at home," kind, considerate, and affectionate as that may seem. To every such plea of excuse we may hear the voice of God speaking to us and saying, "What is that to thee; follow thou Me."

And Philip follows the Saviour in obedience to His command; and having thus followed Him, he too goes forth from the Saviour's presence, constrained by His love to speak of Him to others. Philip finds Nathanael. Nathanael's mind is full of doubts, and fears, and misgivings. Philip stops not to reason. He enters not with him into any controversy as to the probability or improbability of the Messiah coming

from such a place as Nazareth. He meets all his doubts and difficulties with the pressing invitation, "Come and see." Nathanael follows Jesus, and by following the Saviour every doubt is cleared up, every difficulty removed, and light shines upon his hitherto darkened path.

Reader, are you troubled with doubts, and fears, and perplexities? Has the arrow of unbelief entered your soul, harrassing you, tormenting you, eclipsing faith's bright light, and drawing a veil between you and heaven?—follow Jesus and all will be light. Do crosses multiply, do cares increase, are you troubled about many things, does a mysterious Providence seem to hedge up your way that you cannot pass, and do all things seem to say, "Where is *now* thy God?"—still follow Jesus, and you will ere long discern the rays of heavenly love darting through all your earthly clouds. Is thine eye dim with tears; is some loved one lying beneath the green sod; is the welcome footfall and the joyous note heard no more that once made thee glad; and are all things around thee hung with the drapery of gloom and desolation?—still follow Jesus, and yet deeper joy than earth knows shall be yours. Is life's sun setting; do the earthly props of the failing tenement tremble beneath thee; does time's curfew-bell seem ready to sound in thine ears, and art thou asking, How shall I endure the cold stream, and breast the swelling floods, and pierce the thickening mists of the dark valley?—oh, follow Jesus, and all will be well! Leave the future, leave the present, leave the past in His hands. All is well there. Go, like Nathanael, to Jesus. Leave everything in His care. Whatever cheers or saddens; whatever elevates or depresses; all that is great and all that is little. Be it yours to follow Jesus, and then all will be well here, and the end will be bright—very

bright. If you doubt it or still hesitate; earnestly and affectionately would I say to you, as Philip said to Nathanael, "Come and see." "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is gracious!"

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee."

How comforting is the truth that we have One above who knows each one of us, and all our circumstances. Just as He knew Simon by *name*, so does He know each one of us. Just as He knew Nathanael's *character*, saw Him under the fig tree, and knew the thoughts that were passing in his bosom there; so does He see and know each one of His own in this world. Oh, how precious the thought, amid the cold world around us, that knoweth and loveth only its own! How precious the thought, tossed to and fro as we sometimes are, like a vessel stripped of its moorings and out on a tempestuous sea; with no friendly hand stretched forth to help, and with no beacon light to guide us through the gloom! Precious thought! our names known, our places known, our deep unspoken feelings known, and the eye of Jesus resting on us even while we think not! This is *like* Christ! Lord, who is like unto Thee! To whom shall we go but unto Thee, our precious, precious Saviour!

And how wonderfully is that grace and love enhanced, when we think of what we are. How often are our hearts, like Nathanael's, full of distrust, and unbelief, and fear. How much is there in them that is dishonouring to His grace; how much to try His love. How much—Oh! how much has He to bear with in us, hour after hour; and yet what

is *His* thought of us!—what is His language to our Nathanael hearts? “Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!” Yes, in Nathanael we see faintly what the very best of us are *to God*; and in the words of the Saviour to him, we learn what God is *to us*. He beholds us through the unsearchable riches of His grace, and His thoughts of us are, “I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob;” “Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!” In ourselves we are full of sin; we have nothing wherewith to meet the approving smile of our God. But blessed be His Holy Name for the righteousness of God which covers the weakest and feeblest of His children. There is no stain on that robe. There is no spot there. No touch of sin’s defilement can mar its spotless beauty; and though in those who have taken refuge under it, there may be sins many and defilements great, and unbelief’s dark shadows often intercepting much of the glorious brightness of heaven; yet are they in His sight “without guile.” They are “complete in Him” who is “made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” “Blessed is he whose transgression is covered, and whose sin is hid.”

“Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered, and saith unto him, Because I said unto thee I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou?—*thou shalt see greater things than these.*”

Blessed promise—for all those who follow the Saviour! Christian reader, do you look back on life’s pathway and behold your darkest cloud spanned with the rainbow of covenant mercy; that Infinite love has intermingled your bitterest cup; that your prayers to

heaven have all been answered, not in the way you expected, but in a much better way; that behind each frowning Providence, God has veiled His smiling face; and as you think of these things does the gush of grateful love fill your heart towards that precious Saviour, who has done such great things for you?—oh, press on, and you shall see greater things than these! You have seen something already—yea much: but the half has not yet been told you! Press on towards the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Follow the Lord fully. Bear His cross cheerfully. Run your race patiently, and “you shall see greater things than these.”

One word more. Let us mark throughout this narrative, the simple testimony that is borne to Christ. Heaven speaks, and bears witness to Christ in the Jordan, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Holy Spirit speaks, and descending in the form of a dove, bears witness to Christ. John takes up the Spirit’s testimony and bears witness to Christ, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Andrew hears the glad sound, and going forward, proclaims “We have found Christ.” Philip re-echoes it, and says “We have found Christ.” Nathanael catches up the heaven-born strain as it floats from lip to lip; and ere it dies away in glory, acknowledges “I have found Christ.” This Name alone set all hearts in motion, and filled every lip with praise. So let it be, reader, with you and me—Jesus, and Jesus only! Jesus in our hearts, filling them with peace and joy, and setting them in motion to deeds of love, that shall tell upon a dying world. Jesus on our lips, the theme of every testimony, the solace of every grief, the bearer of every burden, the light of them that sit in darkness, and the antidote of death,—Jesus, and Jesus only!

Jesus, how much Thy name unfolds
To every opened ear ;
The pardoned sinner's memory holds
None other half so dear.

Jesus ! it speaks a life of love
And sorrows meekly borne ;
It tells of sympathy above,
Whatever sins we mourn.

It tells us of Thy sinless walk
In fellowship with God ;
And to our ears no tale so sweet
As Thine atoning blood.

This name encircles every grace
That God as man could shew ;
There only can the Spirit trace
A perfect life below.

The mention of Thy name shall bow
Our hearts to worship Thee ;
The chiefest of ten thousand Thou,
The chief of sinners we.

II.

GETHSEMANE AND ITS LESSONS.

LUKE XXII. 39—62.

IN the great drama of the Saviour's agony in the garden, on which we are about to enter; we can scarcely fail to perceive throughout the narrative, the ceaseless activity of Satan, the great enemy of mankind. We have scarcely crossed the threshold of the chapter, ere he appears on the stage. Among the professedly religious, in the Church of God, and in the world outside, we behold him working with amazing activity and inconceivable subtlety. He is seen summoning all his resources and energies, as if for one last and desperate assault. The chief Priests and Scribes are first enlisted in his cause; next he enters the professing church and draws away Judas; he is then seen among the Lord's own people, filling their minds with ambitious disputings as to which should be accounted greatest; then he is presented as seized with a vehement desire to possess them that he may sift them as wheat; he fills the mind of one with self-confidence and pride, and ultimately to deny his Lord with an oath: finally, he leads the whole band of disciples captive at his will, by desiring to take in hand the sword, by falling asleep at the very climax of the Saviour's agony, and by utterly forsaking Him when most of all He needed their sympathy and succour. Rarely is there to be found in the Word of

God a record in which the master spirit of all evil is seen so actively and so variously at work, as the one on which we are about to enter. Satan's efforts being successful, and his victory decisive and complete over all save one,—the Lord Jesus himself thus fulfilling His own remarkable words, "the Prince of this world cometh and *hath nothing in me.*"

And why is Satan thus seen here so active and energetic as to distinguish it almost from every other record in the Bible? Because by the stupendous act about to be accomplished on the cross all his work of sin was to be undone, and his kingdom overthrown. He had in the beginning of the world blasted all God's workmanship. He had for four thousand years brought mourning, lamentation, and woe on all mankind. He had blighted every fair flower in the paradise of God. He had swayed the sceptre of the world and retained undisputed possession of the bodies and souls of men till creation groaned and travailed in pain beneath his iron yoke. Now, however, that reign was to terminate. The sceptre was to fall for ever from the hand of the usurper, and all his doings of four thousand years were to be undone. The seed of the woman was about to bruise the serpent's head, and to lead captivity captive. Death was to lose its sting and the grave its victory. The laurels were to be wrested from the destroyer's grasp, and to be placed on the brow of the despised Nazarene, and He was to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords—the Redeemer of man's sinful soul, the Restorer of man's fallen race, and the Regenerator of a blighted and ruined world. Hence Satan's ceaseless activity. Hence his varied devices and extraordinary success. Hence the summoning up of every energy in order to *mar*, if he could not altogether *overturn*, the grand work of redemption about to be accomplished by the Saviour.

We are told at the opening of the narrative that the Saviour "came out and went as He was wont to the Mount of Olives." That Mount was the Saviour's oratory. Thither He loved to repair when the toils of the day were over, or when His tried and suffering spirit needed repose. He loved its quiet retirement; and there, screened from the rude gaze of men, and from the assaults and temptations of the world, and with nought for His canopy save the darkness of night, did He oft continue till day-break in communion with His Father. Thither the disciples followed Him. All knew the Saviour's predilection for this hallowed spot; and if at any time He were missing, they could track His footsteps to the favoured Mount, and there find Him engaged in intercourse with heaven. Its caverns and verdant slopes had often echoed back the Saviour's cries. The trees and flowers that studded so thickly its banks—yea the very breezes that swept silently by, had they a tongue to speak, could bear testimony to the travail of His soul. And as He now entered it for the last time on earth save as a conqueror rising triumphant from the grave, borne upward in His cloudy chariot to heaven amid the hosts of assembled angels; each stone and rock and tree, each slope and cavern on the mountain side, brought back to mind all the past reminiscences of His holy life, and suggested the first words from His lips, "*Pray*"—"pray that ye enter not into temptation."

It is thus the Saviour sets before us the divine preservative from temptation—prayer. That hour of temptation was now at hand. It surrounded His path like a dark shadow, and He went "as He was wont," and as our Example, to prepare for it by prayer. He alone saw the storm approaching. He saw the gathering elements about to burst in all their fury upon the devoted band;

and as if anxious to warn them by example as well as by precept, He retired within the sanctuary Himself. It seems as if heaven itself would teach the same lesson, as to prayer being the divine panoply against temptation, for we are told "He was *withdrawn* from them about a stone's cast, and, kneeled down and prayed." There, within view, knelt the man of sorrows, and poured out His soul into the bosom of His Father. That presence was His unfailing resource. There did He retire to gather strength for the coming trial with the prince of darkness. From that place He went forth to brave the storm and breast the flood. And though His path lay through sorrow and shame to the ignominious cross, yet did He go forth to conquer, and His course was crowned with victory.

In all this the Saviour stands before us as our Forerunner and Exemplar. We are manifestly taught, both by precept and example, that our only preservative in the hour of temptation is prayer; and that the steps from the sanctuary, though through sorrow and shame, ever end in victory. In such an hour, human resolution is but as a reed shaken with the wind. Education, religious knowledge, the force of example, moral influences leaving their impress on the conscience—these, and all such means, are utterly powerless then. They are but as the armour of Saul girded upon the youthful David. The Christian cannot meet his moral Goliath with these, for he has not proved them. Their weakness he may have proved, but their power, never. He needs a mightier panoply, a more invulnerable pavilion, a diviner weapon wherewith to quench the fiery darts of Satan. That panoply is the presence of God. That pavilion, the secret place of the most High. That weapon,

prayer. Like the disciples in the garden, reader, you know not the character of the foes by which you are surrounded, nor do you realize as you should do, your weakness in the midst of them. These things are only fully known to God. Wherever you may move in this world, you are in the place of temptation. There is no path without its snare. There is no moment of your life in which your spiritual foes, "the rulers of the darkness of this world," are not close upon you. It may be a *garden* where you are, enchantingly attractive; a sunny spot in which the soul may love to repose; yet on its very threshold stands Judas and his armed band—Satan and his agents—all prepared to do their deadly work on your soul. To what refuge shall you betake yourself under this solemn conviction? With what armour should you be clad in this unequal contest? In what but "the whole armour of God?" What refuge of safety lies open for you but the presence of God? Slumber not on that enchanted ground. Repose not on that sunny spot. The Saviour's words still ring loudly in your ears, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." Go forth under a deep sense of weakness to the sanctuary, and from it you will emerge "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Rest not satisfied with a passing interview with the Saviour. Be not content with an occasional visit to the throne of grace. Breathe freely and frequently the air of heaven. Drink deeply of the still waters of the sanctuary. Let it be the home of your heart—the centre of attraction for your supreme affections. Go forth with your eye fixed on Jesus; and though foes of the worst kind be on your threshold, and temptations innumerable in your path, calmness will rest on your brow, repose will fill your mind, peace will nestle in your inmost heart, and joy

that passeth knowledge will light up your path heavenward. You will feel that all your times are in the hands of One who loves you with an everlasting love, and that through Him you are more than conqueror, in all things that are against you.

But not only does the Saviour teach us that prayer is our preservative from temptation; He furnishes us also with a pattern of prayer in His own supplication to heaven,—“Father, *if Thou be willing*, remove this cup from me; nevertheless *not my will, but Thine be done*.” The sum and substance of every prayer should be the will of God. The exercise of prayer can only be a blessing to our souls, when our own will is entirely merged in the will of our Heavenly Father. If we only knew the truth, we should find that prayer is more connected with the discipline of the will than we generally imagine. Our will is not naturally in harmony with God’s. The carrying out of our own will, when bent on some desirable object, is what invariably characterizes us. It becomes habitual to us. We carry it more or less, as a habit, into the presence of God. It must not be however. Wilfulness is not a characteristic of one of God’s children. He is but a child and he must *know* it. He is but a child and he must be *kept* one. The Father’s will is best, and the child must know no will but His. It must be crossed, however painful it may be. To subdue that will, to blend it with His, and to make us perfectly happy under the conviction that our own is not to be carried out, is the only true explanation of many an unanswered prayer, many a bitter cup still unremoved, and many a thorn still left rankling in the flesh. But when the heart has been brought into that state when it can, with happy confiding trust, look up and say, “Father, not my

will, but Thine be done," then will relief come. The thorn indeed may not be extracted, the cup may not be removed, but there will appear the strengthening angel from heaven enabling us to bear it.

Thus it was with the Saviour here. "Father, if Thou be willing, *remove* this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done. And there *appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him.*" God's way of answering His people's prayers is not by *removing* the pressure, but by *increasing their strength to bear it*. Thus it was with the Head here, and thus it is with all the members. "Thrice," says the Apostle, "did I beseech the Lord that the thorn might depart from me:" perhaps without that preface which should ever accompany the Christian's prayer, "Thy will, not mine be done:" if so, no wonder that he should have asked *thrice* before the answer was returned. The will even of an Apostle needed to be crossed, to be disciplined and blended with God's; and when this was done, then, and not till then, did the answer come which comes to all, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It was as if God would say, "Your *strength* may not be sufficient to bear that thorn, but my *grace* is. My object is to make you glory in the thorn; to make *you* willing to bear, what it is *my will* you should bear." And we can see a wise and gracious reason for this. How many of us, if the thorn were removed, would start back like a broken bow into the world, or into sin? The pressure is left upon us as a check to our wandering and backsliding. It is often the fence between the narrow way of life, and the broad road to ruin; and if our Heavenly Father were to remove it, it might be at the sacrifice of heaven. How much need have we then to preface every petition with "Father, not my will, but

Thine be done." Oh! if God had removed that thorny fence in answer, often, to our earnest prayers, how many of us would now be castaways! How many a saint now in glory, would have to lay his crown on the threshold of heaven, and descend to another and far different dwelling-place! How many a song would be hushed! How many a harp would be unstrung! How many a joyous note would be silent! How many a place in the mansions of the redeemed would be unfilled! If God answered all the prayers we put up to heaven, we should need no other scourge. Blessed it is that we have One who knows us better than we know ourselves, and who is too loving to grant, what we too often so rashly ask.

We are furnished with an example of what a believer's prayer should be, from the manner in which the Israelite of old presented his sacrifices to the priest. It was not the Israelite's province to determine what parts of the animal should be offered on the altar, and what parts should be rejected. That was no business of his. That was to be determined by his priest, and by him alone. All that the Israelite had to do was, in obedience to the Divine command, to bring his offering to the priest. So is it now with regard to the spiritual sacrifice of prayer offered by every true spiritual Israelite. It is not his to determine what should be answered and what should be rejected. That pertains to his great High Priest. He has but in faith to bring his offering, "in everything by prayer and supplication to make his requests known unto God," and leave it to His wisdom and love to answer.

Besides, there are other reasons equally wise and gracious why God allows the trial to remain. It is His great design to make us "rejoice in tribulation." It was when the thorn

had been left to pierce the flesh that the Apostle was enabled to say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities." "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities." Why, Paul? "That the power of Christ may rest upon me"—that I may thus be conformed to my Master's image, that I may be like Him. It is not the *removal* of the burden that will make us rejoice in the Lord, but *bearing* it under the sustaining strength of God's "sufficient grace." The most heavenly-minded saints, those who most resemble their Saviour, are *cross-bearers*. It requires but a short interview with them to perceive the image of their Saviour—to recognise them as brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus. This is God's great end in all trial, to mould us into the image of His Beloved Son. Oh, let us not murmur at such gracious discipline, but with the piercings of the thorn in the flesh still strive to say, "Father, I thank Thee for the thorn! I bless Thee for the bitter cup! I praise Thee for each stroke that brings me closer to Thy side! Mould me into that precious image—the likeness of my precious, precious Saviour. Let these messages from Thy loving hand not pass over me like the wind over the rock, but work in me all Thy gracious will, that the glory of Jesus may shine forth, brighter and brighter still, from this poor earthen vessel!"

Tried and afflicted believer, reading these pages but not yet submissive to your Heavenly Father's dealings, this is the spirit God is waiting to see in you. Rebel not at His dealings. Faint not at His rebukes. Say not within yourself, "I cannot submit; my trial is too great. It will weigh me down to the grave!" God will sustain you, and sustain you for this very purpose, to make you thankfully, yea, joyfully submissive. To this God will—God must—bring you.

From it He will not let you pass. Come what will this end must be accomplished. And when this spirit fills your heart then will the strengthening angel from heaven descend and cause you to rejoice in the midst of sorrow, and bring sweetness out of woe. Then will your language be—

“ *Thy way—not mine, O Lord,*

However dark it be !

Lead me by Thine own hand ;

Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be or rough,

It will be still the best ;

Winding or straight, it matters not,

It leads me to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot ;

I would not, if I might :

Choose Thou for me, my God,

So shall I walk aright.

Take Thou my cup and it

With joy or sorrow fill ;

As best to Thee may seem,

Choose Thou my good and ill.

Choose Thou for me my friends,

My sickness or my health ;

Choose Thou my cares for me,

My poverty or wealth.

Not mine—not mine the choice,

In things or great or small ;

Be Thou my guide, my strength,

My wisdom, and my all.”

But to proceed with the narrative, let us notice the conduct of the Lord after the angel from heaven had strengthened Him, as a lesson for ourselves. Notwithstanding the

strength communicated—the blessing received—we are told “He prayed more earnestly.” How often is it the reverse with us. If God strengthens our weakness, or calms our fears, or restores us to health, or sends some other needful blessing, can it be said of *us* that each one only sends us oftener to the mercy-seat? Do they all lead us to “more earnest prayer?” Do they make us more and more familiar with the presence of the Saviour? Do we, on reviewing the dark spots of our earthly history, raise our Ebenezers on each one, and does the deepened gratitude of our souls manifest itself in a life more devoted to Him who hath done so great things for us? Happy for you and me, reader, if it be so! The blessings of heaven will be bestowed upon us with no sparing hand. Life will be an ever-deepening “Te Deum,” without one discordant “Miserere” to mar its joyous notes. We shall then understand fully the force of the Apostolic admonition, “Rejoice in the Lord *always*, and again I say, Rejoice.”

Let us now, having considered the Lord Jesus as the believer's pattern in the solemn and all-important matter of prayer, turn to the other side of the picture, and mark the consequences of its neglect in His own people. The Lord's warning was disregarded by the entire band. With temptation on the very threshold they all slumbered and slept, and into that temptation they fell, an easy and rapid prey. One of the first effects of neglecting prayer was a desire to take the sword to take vengeance on their foes. The next was, “they all forsook Him and fled.” But if we receive a warning from the neglect of prayer in the case of the *whole band*, we may see that warning more conspicuously displayed in the conduct of *one* in that group—that was Peter. He, too, neglected his Lord's warning to pray, and

he not only fell, but his fall was stained with the deepest of crimes. Foremost of the group, he was the first to make the most boastful professions of attachment to the Saviour. In him we see united the twin-sisters of a believer's rapid fall—self-confidence and neglect of prayer. These are invariably united. Communion with God neglected, or curtailed in answer to some less important call, and so often repeated, till any circumstance, however trifling, operates as a sufficient reason for a *present postponement*, and at last rendering the habit itself tedious and irksome; generates in the soul the seeds of a departure from God. Not the least of these is self-confidence, which becomes painfully manifest to every spiritual mind brought in contact with it. The other seeds meanwhile are gradually but surely springing up. There may not be in the believer a decay of all his spiritual graces at once. *Outward zeal* may remain long after hidden and spiritual graces have withered away, and because this continues the soul may be deceived as to its real state before God. A secret and fearful process of declension may be going on within, while there may be nothing outwardly to mark it. One step in the downward road taken, knownt only to the secret conscience itself, and all the rest follow rapidly, till the soul reaches that point in its history when God allows it to have a tremendous fall. Thus it was with Peter. With two such startling features just blossoming in his character, as prayerlessness and self-confidence, we are prepared to hear what follows. The sword of vengeance is taken up. That spirit which communion with God ever generates and cherishes, that would "heal the ear," that would "love the enemy and do good to them that hate us," is banished from the heart, and the spirit of revenge takes its place. Sensitiveness takes pos-

session of our nature. We become morbidly susceptible to everything around us. We are prepared to resent the affront, to retaliate the injury. We come to view everyone and everything around us through the dark shadow that falls across our own hearts. We see the evil, but not the good. We are keenly alive to the failings and blemishes; we are blind to the beauties and excellences. The charity that "thinketh no evil" has no place within us. We have ceased to breathe the atmosphere of God's presence. We are on the downward road, and on the eve of plunging into some deeper and darker gulf.

Shall we pass on and mark another step in this downward path, as shown in Peter? It is seen in the fifty-fourth verse of this narrative. "And Peter followed *afar off*." No longer now does he tread in the steps of his Saviour. No longer now is he seen at His side. He had taken the distant place, and there for a while he lingers. Terrified at the thought of forsaking Christ altogether, he determines to remain *within view*, and yet stand with the *enemies* of Christ. Ah! there is no medium between Christ and the world. At a *distance* from Him we are the "*enemies* of the cross of Christ," and there God leaves us for ever, if sovereign grace do not draw us back to the fold. For a moment the helpless disciple hovers near the boundary. Little did he ever intend to cross it. Little did he dream that it would end as it did. Alas! poor Peter—another moment saw him seated among the crucifiers of the Son of God, at their fire-side and as one of themselves, and the next, like a leaf in the hurricane, trembling with guilty fear in the presence of a servant-maid! The climax is not yet reached. One more step and the plunge is made. "Then began he to *curse* and *swear*, saying, I know not the man." The drama closes.

The curtain falls; and the *prayerless* Apostle sinks into a gulf from which none but God can rescue him!

Was this the zealous, ardent, loving Apostle, who a few moments before had made such professions of attachment? Was this the one who declared with such confidence, "Though I should die with Thee yet will I not deny Thee. I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death!" Yes, this was Peter, the self-confident, prayer-neglecting Apostle. Ah! how little we know ourselves at the very best. Let God only leave us for a moment, and we are like a leaf in the hurricane. Let sovereign grace only withdraw for a moment its upholding hand, and we sink like lead in the mighty waters. There is no depth, however great, to which we may not fall, even to the blasphemy of openly denying the Lord that bought us. It is nothing but the hand of infinite mercy, outstretched to protect us hour after hour, that keeps the very holiest of us from the prison or the gallows!

And mark the final ending of a path of backsliding, traced to neglect of prayer,—"*He went out, and wept bitterly.*" Yes, the path of the backslider must end in the bitterness of sorrow. No light of joy and gladness falls on that path, but a dark shadow of inward uneasiness and dread,—the shadow of darkened hope, banished peace, and fearful looking forward. All assurance of salvation gone; prayer irksome and tedious; the Bible unrelished and unread; the gate of heaven clouded; the Spirit of God grieved; the Lord Jesus crucified afresh, and put to an open shame—with *such* clouds draping the spiritual horizon, who can wonder that the end should be weeping and sorrow, mourning, lamentation, and woe?

Reader, beware of neglect of prayer! Ponder deeply

the cause of Peter's decline. Mark well the steps by which he arrived at his awful state—neglect of prayer—self-confidence—following Christ afar off—in company with the enemies of Christ—and finally, lying, cursing, swearing, and open denial of his Saviour! Oh! beware of the first step—neglect of prayer. Take but this, and every other will surely and quickly follow. Trust not yourself for a moment on any one of them. Feel that your own strength is perfect weakness. Let your footsteps be ever travelling for more grace to the sanctuary. Look to Christ daily and hourly for it. Plant your footsteps firmly on Him. Wrap around your soul the divine panoply of prayer; and then you will stand, for you stand not in your own strength, but in Christ the Rock of Ages.

But what alone recalled the guilty Apostle to his senses? What wakened up conscience from its long sleep? What enabled him to shake off his moral palsy, and brought back to the soul its primal health and vigour? What proved more potent than reflection, than memory, than all the forces of his moral nature combined?—*a look from Jesus. There* was the secret source of all the change. *There* was Omnipotence bidding the dead once more start up from its long earthly sleep. Nothing else could have done what the look of Jesus did. Nothing was so powerful, nothing so touching, nothing so heart-bending, so soul-restoring. One *word* from Jesus made the weeping Magdalene rejoice. One *look* from Jesus brought the backsliding Peter home to the fold. When He puts forth His power, a *word* is sufficient—a *look* it may be, and all is done. It is more powerful than the sympathy of angels from heaven standing at our side. It is more omnipotent than all the boasted forces of man's moral being combined.

And finally, what was it preserved this weak and helpless band of disciples, in the midst of such a sea of dangers? Why were they not like Judas, castaways on a desert shore? What held them up amid the waterfloods of temptation and the snares of the adversary, that lay so thickly in their path? Only the all-prevailing efficacy of a Saviour's intercession—"I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." Satan had deeply laid his plans for the destruction of the entire band. They saw not; they knew not. But their knowledge of the danger was not necessary to His intercession. He had thrown around their souls the shield of His Almighty protection, and they were safe.

Christian reader, it is the same now. We know not the subtlety of the foe at our side. We see not his deep-laid plans for our destruction. We little dream that it hangs over our very threshold ere nightfall. We are poor, blind, helpless creatures. We have no strength—no grace of our own that we can boast of. But blessed be His holy Name! Covenant mercy has thrown around us the shield of a Saviour's intercession. We are hidden in the clefts of a Rock that can never be moved. We are "kept by the power of God unto salvation;" and He who has loved us as His own, will love and preserve us to the end. Let us lean on the arm of that precious Saviour. Let us distrust ourselves. Let us cry for more grace to sustain us in our journey heavenward, and run that journey with patience, ever "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

Let us close our remarks on this narrative with two needful and salutary warnings; one derived from Peter, the other from the entire band of disciples.

Let us take warning from Peter's history of the *blinding*

power of sin. Though only a few hours previously he had been solemnly warned by the Lord Jesus that he would fall; though he had been plainly told that he would three times deny his Saviour with an oath, yet he starts not, he trembles not! On he goes from one downward step to another, apparently unconscious of the rapid strides he is taking. One wonders he did not reflect. We look at every step for a pause. Expectation is at its height as we see him seated among the murderers of the Son of God, at the same time well knowing that his Saviour was now standing, like a felon, at Pilate's bar. Nay, he starts not from his slumber! The backslider's sleep is unbroken! The demoniac influence of sin blinds his eyes and hurries him onward! Only one thing can rouse the slumberer from his guilty nightmare. What is that? A look from Jesus!

Such, reader, is the blinding effect of sin on the soul. Neglected prayer changes the hue and colour of all things. It throws a haze over what is even hideous and revolting. It paralyzes the spiritual feelings. It draws a film over the spiritual vision, and renders us incapable spiritually, if not morally, of reflection. The *high* standard by which the soul had been accustomed to measure *its own state* and the character of everything around it, is lowered. Moral perception of what is right and wrong is either lost, or confined to what is *glaring*. Neglected prayer is the spiritual man's shroud—his death—his grave! Reader, may God write this warning on *your* heart!

Secondly, let us take warning from the conduct of *all* the disciples. Mark their folly. While they were surrounded on every side by foes plotting their destruction; while they were on the eve of the most stupendous

event the world has ever heard of or witnessed, how were they engaged?—"disputing which of them should be accounted greatest!" Oh height of folly! Oh children in sense and understanding! But are there not instances of equal folly in many of God's people now? While God is doing His great and strange work, gathering out His elect in multitudes; when the coming of the Lord is at our very door; while eternity with all its solemn realities is on our very threshold, and thousands are dying in sin all around us, see how some trifle and sport away the precious time! See how some of God's people are wrangling about hair-splitting distinctions of doctrine, or Church government! See how a brother in Christ is watched by a brother, and if a flaw can be discovered in his writing or preaching, what a controversy is generated! See how little technicalities, petty differences of thought, shades of difference in doctrine, or as to the meaning of some passage in God's Word, beget controversy, high words, mistrust, and distance between brother and brother! And all this with the coming of the Lord at our door, with thousands dying in sin, with a divided and bleeding church, and a dying world! Oh height of folly! Oh children in sense and understanding! When shall we cease to be unwise, and become like our Heavenly Master! "Rise and pray;" rise and work; rise and labour for God; rise and outvie with each other in love to the Saviour, and love to one another; rise and act, in the full conviction that we have *sterner* work to do, and that we have no time to waste away the hours in strife and debate and contention: that we have to work like men who know the value of time, and who know that that time is short. God teach His people in this day better things! God give us more sense, and more understanding and

more love! God make us "forget the things *behind*," and in a race that is well nigh run, press forward with an earnestness we have never done before, "towards the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus," "hasting unto the coming of the day of God," and labouring to "finish our course with joy, to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold of eternal life," that so "an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Reader, think of these things. Thus labour, and let the world see you labouring, till the Lord shall send for you.

Go, labour on! spend and be spent,—

Thy joy to do the Father's will;

It is the way the Master went,

Should not the servant tread it still?

Go, labour on! 'tis not for nought,

All earthly loss is heavenly gain!

Men heed thee not, men praise thee not;

The Master praises! what are men?

Go, labour on! enough, enough,

If Jesus praise thee, if He deign

To notice e'en thy willing mind,

No toil for Him shall be in vain.

Go, labour on,—while it is day,

The long dark night is hastening on;

Speed, speed thy work,—up from thy sloth;

It is not thus that souls are won!

See thousands dying at your side,

Your brethren, kindred, friends at home;

See millions perishing afar,

Haste, brethren, to the rescue come!

H. BONAR.

III.

THE PROPHET'S VISION.

ISAIAH VI.

READ the Bible as we will—every word spells Christ. On Him hangs the solution of every type, ceremony, and figure. In His light, we see light in all. Without Him, all is mystery and darkness.

We are about to enter on a most solemn but instructive portion of God's Holy Word. It embraces things in heaven, and things on earth. It first presents to our view the great Subject of all things in heaven and on earth—the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting on His throne of glory, (see John xii. 39—41). Under the figure of the Seraphim, we are next presented with a picture of the Church and her service in heaven, (see Revelation iv. 2—9). And lastly in the Prophet Isaiah himself, we may see shadowed forth, the Church and her service on earth. This, so far as I can judge, is an outline of the spiritual instruction we may derive from this comprehensive and interesting chapter.

The primary explanation of the vision seems to be this. The nation of Judah had fallen into idolatry. Apostacy abounded on every side. Isaiah is commanded by the Lord, to go and rebuke the people for their wickedness, and to

pronounce on them God's terrible judgments. The missionary is prepared for his work by God Himself, as we learn from the effects the vision produced on him. Judgment culminates in mercy to the remnant, who are to return to the worship of the true God, and to be blessed in the earth. Such appears to be the literal and primary explanation of the entire chapter.

There might be another lesson designed for the nation of Judah in this vision, at least for those who still remained true to the worship of Jehovah, and one which it may probably have been the Holy Spirit's intention to teach them. Their good King Uzziah was dead. The throne was vacant. All things looked discouraging. Matters seemed to have reached a crisis in their history. Probably many were troubled and cast down. At this juncture the Lord reveals Himself to the Prophet as seated upon His throne in heaven. Thus they were to learn, probably, that though the nation had turned its back upon God He was still the supreme and jealous Ruler over all. He was above all Gods, and His throne above all thrones—"high and lifted up." Though the *earthly* throne might be vacant, and all things might look dark and discouraging, the Lord had not vacated *His* throne. He was King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Though everything on *earth* might be out of course, all was right in *heaven*. It seemed to say to all those in Judah who "sighed and cried for the abominations of the land," and whose hearts were cast down within them, "Look above earth and earthly things. All is right here. I am the Lord, *I* change not, though all is changing beneath." "I am the Lord, *I* change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

What a needed lesson for us as well as for them! We

are so circumscribed by things of time and sense, as, unconsciously, to forget things eternal and within the veil. We need to be ever reminded that there is something infinitely higher than them all, where alone the heart can truly find repose. When earthly things are all out of course, and the horizon is dark over our heads, we need to be continually reminded that our "house is not so with God;" that "when flesh and heart fail, God faileth not;" that when kings and rulers give up their breath and return to the dust; when distress of nations with perplexity is overspreading the earth, and men's hearts are failing them for fear, "the Lord sitteth upon the waterfloods." The Lord sitteth on His throne and stilleth the raging of the sea. Here all is change; there all is stability. Here all is passing away; there all endureth for ever. Here all is unrest, turmoil, and tossing; there is the repose of every faculty, and the everlasting home of the heart.

What a comfort is this amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life! The world may change; our position and circumstances in this world may change; sceptres may be broken and thrones may lie scattered in the dust; the smiling face and fond greeting of earthly friendship and love may ere nightfall yield to alien looks and estranged affection, and the brightest and best of all earthly things around us may be as the fading hues of even. How sweet in the midst of such a transient and fleeting scene to look upward and feel that "our house is not so with God;" to cast a look within the veil and see stability written on all, even when everything earthly is shaking beneath us! Oh! what perfect peace for the heart, what calm repose for the troubled spirit! Let life's fitful fever waste away the earthly tenement and crumble it to dust; let time's curfew bell ring the

knell of this trembling world; still can the believer look up and see his anchor within the veil, holding his frail bark safe amid all its breakers, and enabling him to ride triumphantly on life's stormiest sea. He can hear a "still small voice" whispering amid all its troubled tumult to his inmost soul, and saying, "Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth."

But let us proceed and look at the opening vision as presenting us with a view of the Church of God and her service in heaven. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." If we turn to the 4th of Revelation, we shall see the correspondence between the vision of Isaiah and the scene therein described. "And immediately I was in the spirit; and behold *a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.* And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and *round about* the throne were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And *the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him*; and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*, which was, and is, and is to come." We cannot fail to perceive that these two scenes are evidently identical, and represent to us the Church of God and her service in heaven. If we have any doubt as to this, it is at once cleared up by a reference to the 8th and 9th verses of the fifth chapter following. "And when he had taken the

book, the *four living creatures fell down before the Lamb . . . And they sung a new song*, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and *hast made us unto our God kings and priests*, and we shall reign on the earth."

Having now seen the seraphim as representing the Church of God and her service in heaven, let us notice, for our instruction, some of the spiritual features connected with it. The most prominent of these is humility. Each of the seraphim, we are told, had "six wings," but with *four* of that number they cover themselves. What a lesson of humility is here! This is their prominent grace. This is their true beauty in the midst of all that glory. God alone is conspicuous. All others are covered.

And the Church in heaven and the Church on earth are one. They each stand in the presence of the same God. The only distinction between them is, that one sees "eye to eye, and face to face," the other beholds by faith. This covered posture is that which each takes when the presence of God is truly realized. Thus it is in this vision. The Church on high covers itself in God's presence, while the Church on earth exclaims, "Woe is me, for *I* am undone. I am a man of unclean lips." Yes, this is the *only* place man can *ever* take before God, and humility is the most Godlike grace the Church can manifest. No garment becomes her so well as this. Never is she seen so beautiful, as with this beauty which her Lord puts upon her. Never does she approach so near to the throne of God, as when covering herself with dust and ashes at the foot of the cross of Christ.

Oh that we would all learn the lesson, and ever take this covered posture at the Saviour's feet! We each stand as they do in the presence of the same God, though engaged in the various duties of the world. How solemn the thought! How should it arrest every heart, and bow it down in deepest adoration! How should it put to flight every high thought, every proud look, every lofty imagination! How should it lay the soul in dust and ashes, and draw from the lips the fitting ascription, "Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only art most high, in the glory of God the Father!" This is humility—the holiest and most beautiful of all the garments of heaven; and none becomes sinners such as we are, so well.

"The bird that soars on highest wing
Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
And she that doth most sweetly sing,
Sings in the shade when all things rest:
In lark and nightingale we see,
What honour hath humility.

"When Mary chose the better part,
She meekly sat at Jesus' feet;
And Lydia's gently-opened heart
Was made for God's own temple meet.
Fairest and best adorned is she
Whose clothing is humility.

"The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown
In deepest adoration bends;
The weight of glory bows him down,
Then most, when most his soul ascends,
Nearest the throne of God we see
What honour hath humility."

But let us notice more particularly the action of the seraphim here. We are told that "with twain he covered his *face*, and with twain he covered his *feet*, and with twain he did *fly*." Why should the "face" and "feet" be covered more than any other part of the body? The answer to this question is deeply significant and instructive, confirming, most fully, our previous remarks on humility. The face is that part of the human body in which is expressed the *inner* man. Thoughts, feelings, dispositions—the exact character of the mind—all find expression in the face. It is the representative of the *inward* man. The action of the seraphim covering the face, then, is striking. It is as if they would say, "All within us is unholy. All *within* us must be covered in God's presence. We need the *heavenly wings* to hide it. Thou only art holy. Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." This is the *place* they take, though perfectly holy. Nor less expressive are the "*feet*" here. They are symbolical of the *walk* of the believer—of his *outward* conduct in this world. Just as the face expresses the *inward* man, so do the feet express the *outward* man. By the seraphim covering their feet they seem to say, "All that we *do* is unholy. All our best services are full of unworthiness. We need the heavenly wings to cover it. Thou only art holy. Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." Equally expressive also are the wings with which "they did fly." They are never intended for the *earth*. They are ever given to enable the creature to *rise from the earth, and soar heavenwards*. They give us the idea of heavenly service. The seraphim thus seem to say, "All our service is heavenly. No longer of the earth, earthy. No longer grovelling in the dust below, but now of heaven, and to do His high behest."

Such is the attitude of the Church in heaven, under the figure of the seraphim. As conscious sinners, yet with not a stain of sin on them. As *redeemed* ones, but giving all praise to their Redeemer. As bought with a price, yet casting their crowns at His feet. This is the Church in heaven. Though reflecting inwardly and outwardly the holiness of Him who sits on the throne, yet will she take the *covered* place, and exclaim throughout the countless ages of eternity, "Worthy is the Lamb." "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts."

Let us notice one or two more features in the seraphim, before we pass on. We have seen the *attitude* of the Church in heaven, let us mark next her *service* there. "And one *cried unto another* and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." Their service is the worship and praise of Him who sitteth on the throne. This is fully confirmed by a reference to the same scene described in the Apocalypse of St. John. There will doubtless be *various kinds* of service in heaven. The wings of the seraphim with which "*they did fly*" clearly indicate this. But neither in this vision, nor yet in the Apocalypse, are we *told* of any other service than the worship and praise of the Saviour. They cry "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." They sing a new song before the throne, "Thou art worthy." "Alleluia, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." It is thus that the Spirit of God, by anticipation, excludes all prying inquisitive conjectures as to what those various kinds of service will be, and centres our thoughts upon what is *certain*, and what alone should now occupy our minds—the praise and worship of the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

Another feature worthy of notice is the *unity* of the

Church in heaven. Christ is the subject of praise; consequently we read, "*one cried unto another.*" All have one mind, one heart, one voice, on this subject. There is no discord. There is no difference. All is perfect harmony. All are one here, and praise is the spontaneous expression from "one to another." And why? Because *Christ* is the theme. There may be variety and diversity even in heaven. Even as it is on earth, no two minds or voices exactly alike, in order that our views of God may be magnified, so will it probably be in heaven. Unity yet variety. Harmony yet diversity. Just as in the children of one family there are diversities of countenances, yet all bearing some likeness to the mother; or as the varied chords of a harp, yet all blending in one harmonious song, "Thou art worthy." "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts."

And is it not the same in the Church below as in the Church above? When Christ is the theme, is there not one mind, and one heart, and one song? This is the only bond of unity that she knows. This is the only thing that makes her a Church at all. The prominency with which she exalts Jesus, gives her her true standing before God. By this Name she rises or falls. It is not by her soundness of creed, her clearness of doctrine, or her evangelical profession. It is "What think ye of *Christ*?" And it is they, no matter what their creed may be, in whose *hearts* Christ has an exalted place, whose affections are awakened and kept in motion by the sound of Jesus' precious Name; who are the true worshippers of God. They "believe in the communion of saints," for they know what it is. They worship in the same temple, mingle in the same praises, and walk hand in hand, even when on earth, with the blessed tones round the throne. Their souls ascend in joyful yet

solemn silences to that throne, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." And those who, not lost, but gone before, are standing around it, pass and re-pass from the heavenly to the earthly court of worshippers, and cry, "Worthy is the Lamb." They clasp their hands in ours. They blend their praises with ours. They fly on wings of love to serve the same Saviour as ours. Earthly scenes hinder not our sweet fellowship together. Time, and sense, and sin, mar not the holy converse between us. We gaze by faith, sometimes amounting to sight, on the fond faces we have known and loved on earth. We see the smile that earth's scenes often damped below, now lighted up with heavenly joy and gladness. We see the bosom that oft breathed faintly the dear Name of Jesus on earth, now swelling with holy, unhindered, eternal rapture. We see a multitude that no man can number, standing on the sea of glass, yet mingling their songs with ours; and, as we catch their smile of recognition, we feel how sweet the fellowship of saints, how precious the bond that binds us together! What is that bond? Jesus—Jesus only! Take Him away, and what would all heaven's brightest scenes be, but tinsel or dross! Take Him away, and all would be but the gloom of the sepulchre, and the silence of the grave!

Let us now proceed to notice the Church on earth—her history and mission, as shadowed forth in the Lord's dealings with the Prophet.

The first entrance door to the Church of God on earth, is *conviction of sin* produced by the light of heaven shining upon the soul of man. It is the first work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven:—"He shall convince the world of sin." No work of God is genuine without it. No man ever yet entered heaven, or ever can enter it, with-

out this work be first wrought within him. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There may be reformation of character, but reformation of character is not *spiritual life*. There may be morality, religiousness, sentimental piety, but none of these are *spiritual life*. These are but its galvanism, its imitation, its spurious counterfeit. Spiritual life first enters the soul with a deep conviction of its inward depravity, its moral alienation from God, and its consequent exposure to the wrath of God. All its views of itself become at once changed. All its ideas of God, of eternity, of life, and of death, undergo a great and mighty revolution. Carelessness and indifference as to its own true state before God, vanish. The whole soul becomes roused. Earnestness takes possession of it. Its sleep is broken. One thought now takes precedence of every other. One question rises before the soul's view with an importance it never had before,—“What *must* I do to be saved?” Till this is settled, the soul is driven to and fro on a stormy and troubled sea. Till this is satisfactorily answered, there is no peace, no comfort, no repose for the aching heart. The finger of God has stirred the stagnant waters, and it can find no rest. This is conviction of sin: this is the first dawn of spiritual life.

Mark how all this is exemplified in the following verses of this chapter.

“Then said I, *Woe* is me for I am *undone*; because I am a man of *unclean lips*.” The light of heaven falls upon the Prophet, who stands before us as the representative of the sinner, and immediately he sees what he never saw before—his inward depravity and uncleanness, and his consequent exposure to the wrath of God. He feels that he is *ruined*, and he traces that ruin only to one source—

"because I am a man of *unclean lips*." He goes farther, and lets us see that the change produced in him is of *divine* origin—"for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." But not only does the Holy Spirit in convincing the soul of sin, give that soul a true view of *itself*, it gives it a right view of everything and every one *around* it—"I dwell in the midst of a *people* of unclean lips." The "eyes of the understanding become enlightened." The scales of ignorance and darkness fall off. The mind for the first time obtains *God's* view of itself, and of everything around it. This is the Spirit's first work. This is the soul's first birthday in the Church of God. It has crossed the threshold. It has planted its footsteps within the heavenly corridor. Now begins its real life, its true history. It had neither before; for man only begins to live, when he lives to God. But now it has a history, one to which angels love to listen, and which shall stretch throughout an immeasurable eternity. Now God's hammer has been laid upon the stone in the dark quarry, and it has been separated from the mass, and henceforth commences the hewing and shaping and polishing, to adorn the heavenly temple. Now the drop from the vast ocean of sin, has taken hold of a heavenly sunbeam, and, rising upward, sparkles with the hues and tints of the Sun of Righteousness, telling its own tale of glory and beauty to all around.

Reader, this is conviction of sin. This is the divine threshold through which man enters heaven. Let me affectionately ask has this been *your* history? Have you been thus convinced of sin? If not, you are still unsaved. With all your knowledge of the world and the things of the world, with all your discoveries in learning, in science, in religion, in the world of spirit, and in the world of sense; you

are still blind to the true state of your own heart, and utterly ignorant as to any real knowledge of God. You are still "dead in trespasses and sins." "Dead!"—what an awful state! What an appalling condition! How instinctively we shrink from the touch of the corpse! How solemn, the glazed eye, the sunken cheek, the wasted frame, and the ghastly figure, fast turning to corruption and putridity! Yet, reader, if you have never yet been convinced of sin this is *your* spiritual state. This is the spiritual figure under which God describes you—"dead in trespasses and sins." "He that hath not the Son of God, *hath not life.*" "You hath He quickened, *who were dead.*" Yes, with all your intellectual greatness, your splendid genius, your noble endowments, your religious creed, and punctilious observances, you are *dead*! Dead to any spiritual understanding of God! Dead to any true knowledge of the Saviour, or to any work of the Holy Spirit on your heart! Dead to all those spiritual experiences, and hallowed emotions, and comforting hopes, and unutterable joys, which burn in every converted soul! "*Dead!*" and your spiritual picture is drawn in that corpse from whose touch you instinctively recoil, and drawn, too, by the hand of God Himself! How awful! How it should make you pause and tremble! How it should make you start up from your guilty nightmare! Yet see how calmly and quietly you tread the very brink of ruin! See how contentedly you are steering your course to the bar of a just and holy God! See how you trifle with your Maker, and sport with eternity, and rush on heedlessly to perdition! Oh, reader, pause and reflect. Have you been convinced of sin? Have you ever yet experienced any spiritual change within you? Have the avenues of your barred and bolted

heart been thrown open to the admission of the Saviour? *Have* you passed from death unto life? Answer these questions, I beseech you, solemnly before God.

But let us mark the history of this newly-awakened one, and trace in it the life and history of each member of the Church of God. After conviction of sin, comes pardon of sin. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a *live coal* in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off *the altar*: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo! this hath touched thy lips; thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The sinner brought by the Holy Spirit of God to feel his lost and ruined state, is now shown the remedy. That remedy proceeds from the same source as the conviction of sin. The sinner has no part in it whatever. His eyes having been opened to the disease, are pointed to "the altar" and "the live coal" in heaven. They are far above his reach. They are both of God, and of God only. He is thus taught that salvation is altogether of sovereign grace. Nor this only. He is taught that the *application* of the remedy to his own special case is of sovereign grace also. The seraphim must take the coal from off the altar. The seraphim must touch the lips. The seraphim must pronounce the sinner clean. Oh! are we not manifestly taught here, that salvation is altogether a divine work. Are we not shown most clearly, that in the great work of regeneration, man has no part whatever. As soon could the Prophet have stretched forth his hands from earth to heaven, and have taken that coal himself, as can the sinner cleanse his own soul or take any part in its cleansing. Oh no! God's way of salvation is to point the consciously guilty one to "the altar" and "the coal"—to the Saviour

and His most precious cleansing blood, of which these are figures ; to make him listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit proclaiming in his ears, " Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." " The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." " Lo ! this hath touched thy lips"—this hath met thy case—" thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." He turns not the conscience-smitten one to his prayers, to his repentance and tears, to his holy living, or to his religious observances, as a means of cleansing himself or obtaining God's mercy. He opens the eye of faith to behold salvation already accomplished, the entire work already done. The awakened one exclaims, " I am undone, because I am a sinner." The Spirit of God points to the *cross of Jesus*, and says, in the language of Nathan to David, " the Lord also hath put away thy sin." " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This is salvation.

Reader, do you know that your soul is saved? Have you looked to Jesus, and found peace for a guilty conscience in His atoning blood? Perhaps you say, " I do look to Christ, and Him alone, for salvation. All my hope is in Him. I have renounced every other, but yet I do not feel that I have settled peace. I am not happy." Why, dear friend? Has not Jesus died for you? Has not Jesus put away your sin? Why that uncertainty, then? " Oh ! if I could only feel sure that He died for *me*; that He put away *my* sins." Then you want the *feeling* of this; the assurance of it for yourself. But remember, the *fact* of your sins being forgiven is one thing; the *assurance* of that fact is quite another. God has said that your sins *are* put away. Your not feeling certain about it cannot alter the fact. That remains for ever. Nothing can touch it. It is

your everlasting salvation. What, then, do you require to make you happy? Not salvation, for that you have got; but you want to *believe* it. *Believe* what God says, and you will then *feel* happy. You want to *feel* first, before you will believe it; this is your own way. *Believe* first and then you will *feel* it; this is God's way. And take care not to confound things that differ. Salvation is one thing; the *feeling* that *you* are saved is quite another. The former you have; the latter you will have if you only believe what God tells you. Oh believe! Only believe!

But you may ask, "What has God told me?" This is what He tells you, "Having made peace through the blood of His cross." To whom is this said? To the very chief of sinners. And what does it mean? It means this—Christ by His death on the cross hath *made* peace between God and *you*. If then God is satisfied with *you* because of what Christ has done; if God is now well pleased with *you* because of Christ's work, why should *you* not be satisfied? If *God* is well pleased with you, is not that all you want? If everything that stood in the way between you and God—your sin, your guilt, your trespasses—have all been removed by the blood of Christ, what hinders your peace of mind? What disturbs your conscience? Why are you not happy? Why are you not rejoicing with joy unspeakable in the *finished* work of Jesus? Perhaps you reply, "True, but I cannot believe He did it for *me*: I am *such* a sinner. I am the very chief of sinners." Why herein is the very reason He did it! "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If you were not exactly what you feel yourself to be, "the very chief of sinners," it could not be for you. It is this that makes you just the very one Christ died for—just the very one Christ speaks peace to—

just the very one for whom God hath done such great things. Oh! take God at His word. Believe what He tells you, and you will have peace. Only believe.

"But I am afraid I do not believe *rightly*, and the Bible says, unless I believe I have not eternal life." Now you are making a Saviour of your *faith*, just as before you made one of your *feelings*. It is not your feeling rightly, believing rightly, or praying rightly, that saves you. All these are not what they should be. They are all faulty. They are all full of sin. But none of these are your Saviour. It is Jesus—Jesus only. All who ever came to the Saviour in the New Testament, had the same things to say, yet Jesus sent none away empty. Not one. So with you. So with every one. God says not "he that believeth rightly, or cometh rightly, or asketh rightly, hath everlasting life." If He *had* said so, there would have been an end of it, for not one of us could ever have been saved. Blessed be His Holy Name, it is "he that *believeth*"—whether rightly or wrongly, whether weakly or strongly—"he that *believeth* hath everlasting life." Oh! believe this, and be happy! Only believe.

"But I see so much unholiness in me that I am wretched. I was once happy, but now my sins seem to rise in view in a way I never knew before. I never thought I could be so bad. I seem to be a hypocrite." What makes you unhappy?—looking at *yourself* instead of *Christ*. No wonder you are unhappy! But, dear friend, remember this, *God* does not look on you thus. He has ceased to look at you altogether. He looks on His Son Jesus *instead* of you. He looks at Him on *your* behalf—as *your* Substitute—as *your* Representative. He looks on you exactly as He looks on His only beloved Son. Is He holy?—so are you. Is

He complete—accepted—beloved?—so are you. As Christ is, so are you in God's sight. Oh, believe! Only believe!

But why are you unhappy? It was the glimpse of *Christ* that first gave you peace, and now, perhaps, Satan is turning your eye to something else, so that you have lost it. Perhaps you are thinking that *in addition* to Christ's complete work for you, there must be *something good in yourself*—some improvement—some feeling—some better faith—before you may expect to *retain* that peace. This, dear friend, is the secret cause of your unhappiness. It is the sight of the cross, and that alone, that can give you peace, and it is to the cross alone you must look for a *continuation* of that peace. It is what you see in *Christ*, and not what you see in *yourself* that will give you peace, and *keep* you in peace. Oh! remember this. Perhaps you say, in despair,—“the more I look into my heart, the more miserable and unhappy I am.” Do you wonder at it? Did you ever expect to see something else *there* than *sin*? Your heart is worse—*infinitely* worse—than you have the least idea of. How vain, then, to look *there* for any comfort! Would you look into a dungeon for light? Would you look into *hell* for love or joy, peace or holiness? You are to look into yourself, not for holiness, but for sin; not for good, but for evil; not for life, but for death; not for happiness, but for misery. Look at yourself, in order to be *more dissatisfied* with your own heart. Look at Christ, in order to become more and more satisfied with Him and His work.

But now, having anticipated a few hindrances in the way of a sinner's peace with God, let us proceed with our subject. Let us continue the Church's history on earth. After conviction of sin, and the cleansing of sin, let us

notice the *effect* produced on the sinner. "Also I *heard* the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Here we are taught another divine lesson. Now that the sinner is cleansed, his *ear* is opened. Now "he hath an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto him." Now he is conscious that he stands in the presence of God, and that God is speaking to him. He knew nothing of this before. He was deaf. He was blind. He was "*dead* in trespasses and sins." Now all is changed. He is *alive*—alive unto God. He is *awake*—awake out of sleep. He is a new creature. "Old things are passed away;" behold the wondrous change, "all things are become new!" New hopes awaken him. New prospects animate him. New affections constrain him. New motives influence him. He is a new man—new all over. He may sit at the same desk as usual. He may traverse the same streets as usual. He may buy and sell, and get gain, as usual. In everything that characterizes him, he may be the man, the merchant, the father, the husband—entering with heart and spirit into the duties of each; nothing constrained, nothing affected, nothing eccentric; yet, in all that constitutes the *man*—affections, hopes, joys, motives, conduct—he is a *new* creature. This is the Christian.

Mark another truth taught here. It was not till the Prophet was awakened and cleansed that the *call to service came*. God must *cleanse* the vessel before He can *use* it for His glory. You must be converted, before you can be a true servant of Christ. Joshua, the high priest, must first be cleansed, before God could hold communion with him (see Zech. iii. 6, 7). Saul must first be awakened, before he could be "a chosen vessel," to carry forth Christ's glory. God *may* use an unconverted man just as He used

Balaam and Judas. But in all that pertains to the awakening of souls; in all that pertains to His service and glory; man must be born again, and be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, before he can become a true servant of God.

Let us notice another feature in the narrative of the Prophet, reflecting the history of the Church of God. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." All service to the Lord must proceed from a willing heart. This is a law in the school of God. He will have no other. We see this beautifully confirmed in Exodus xxv. 2: "Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering; of every man that *giveth it willingly* with his *heart*, ye shall take my offering." There is no compulsion, no constraint in God's service. All must flow from the heart, made willing in the day of His power. The spring of all grateful service to Christ, is His own love implanted in the soul. Thus is it here. "*Whom* shall I send, and who will go *for us*?" sounds in the Prophet's ears. "For us" awakens all the new-born affections of the heart, and leads it to respond, unhesitatingly and joyfully, "Lord, here am I; send me." There needs no other motive to constrain us to joyful, ready obedience, than the words "for us." "What can I do for Him who has done so great things for me?" is the heart's spontaneous language. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Take my hands, my heart, my head, and use them for Thy glory. Let me henceforth be no longer my own but Thine. Fill the empty vessel, Lord, with Thy glory; and send it, thus freighted, to work, hour after hour, upon a needy world. The best I can give, is unworthy of Thee. It is

poor, it is sinful, it is vile ; yet here it is. 'Here am I,' O Lord ; use me for Thy glory. 'Send me.' Such is ever the language of the heart, when brought, like the Prophet here, to see what great things God hath done for it. It seems to say,

" Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small ;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

This is the first gush of grateful love that wells up from within, when we are brought for the first time, to know and love the Saviour. How earnest our zeal. How warm our affections. How willing our footsteps. How self-denying our labours. Like a summer sky, all seems bright before us. We see not, or if we see, we heed not, the gathering clouds in the distance. We go forth with the thought that every difficulty will be overcome, and every foe quickly vanquished in our path. Alas ! how little we have counted the cost ! The cross is before us, with all its piercings. The cross, the cross, the cross, every step of our journey. This is the next stage of the Church's history on earth, and is presented to us in the following verse. "And He said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not ; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." From the moment the believer is brought to the knowledge of God, and becomes a follower of the Saviour, he has to take up the cross. "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me," said the Lord to His disciples. He has to go forth to the world, with the testimony of condemnation.

"The whole world lieth in the wicked one." Judgment has been passed upon it, and wrath is coming upon it to the uttermost. The believer is now no longer of it. He is to go forth and testify against it. He is to proclaim God's terrible judgments. He is to warn men, and point them to the Ark of safety—the Lord Jesus Christ. He cannot go forth into this world, in any other way, than as a testimony against it, for all its works are evil. Its maxims are evil; its principles are evil; its tendencies are evil; its doings are evil. In what other way can a child of heaven act, but as a testimony, hour after hour, against it. His conduct is a testimony against it. His principles are a testimony against it. His motives are a testimony against it. He goes forth into it, as the Prophet is sent forth here, a testimony of condemnation, on account of its sin against God, its alienation from God, and its continued rejection of God. Nor is his testimony to cease, till that judgment is poured out; till every jot and tittle of God's Word is fulfilled, and till the Lord Jesus Christ shall come the second time, to restore all things. The Church of God is to stand in it, as her Master stood—a testimony against it to the very end. And not till that end shall come, is that testimony to cease. "Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."

Reader, let me ask, how are you standing day by day, in relation to this world? Are *you* a living testimony for Christ in the midst of it? Does the world understand you? Are you a *marked* man? Does your holiness and blamelessness of life rebuke the ungodliness and crooked policy, which abound on every side of you? Does your integrity and up-

rightness in matters of business, and in all the various duties of life, rebuke the crooked ways, and artful schemes, and dishonest stratagems, and selfish principles of the multitude? Are you in all these things, daily striving to walk as a testimony for Christ? Oh! the world is not blind. It is quick to discern a flaw or a blot in a Christian professor. And a flaw in one who bears the holy Name of Jesus, exerts far more mischief, than the open ungodliness of multitudes who know not God. Then, reader, ask yourself, what influence does my daily life exert on those around me? Am I a child of the light and of the day? Am I an epistle, known and read of my neighbours, and relatives, and friends? Oh! it is sad to see a believer with the marks and shadows of the world upon him. No wonder that the life of God in the soul of such an one, should be at a low ebb. No wonder that his peace should be disturbed, that his assurance of salvation should have fled, that the witness of the Spirit within him, should be faint and low. No wretchedness so great as that of being half-worldling and half-Christian. Better far be worldling out and out. Better far be honest before God and man, than try to deceive both. No! Christianity yields no peace, no joy, no comfort, no bright hope of glory, to the half-hearted. To know what its fruits are, you must live it, act it—out and out. It must be your *all*, or nothing. It must be carried into every duty, every practice, every thought, and every word—every hour and every moment of the day. Only the man who knows Christianity thus, knows it at all. Only the man who knows it thus, knows the blessedness of being a *Christian*. Only the man who knows it thus, can be a living testimony to his Saviour in the world. All others are “the unsavoury salt,” the living names with dead influences; and are walking in

company with those, who are *enemies* of the cross of Christ.

And one more question, Christian reader, ere I pass on. What are you doing for Christ? Are you a testimony for Him in your *labours*, as well as in your *conduct*? Are you warning those around you, of coming judgment? Do you urge them to flee from the wrath to come? Is your finger ever pointing to the Ark, and bidding the poor weary wanderers of the world, fly into it for safety? Oh, how does the daily indifference and supineness of our lives, rebuke us! We have fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters; we live with them, we talk to them, we write to them—but have not one word for Christ. We have husbands and wives, and children and servants; we live with them, we talk to them, we write to them,—but say not one word for Christ. We have neighbours, and friends, and relatives; we meet them on Change, in the market, in the street, in the drawing-room; we talk to them, we write to them—everything finds a place in our tongues, in our hearts, and for our pens—everything but Christ! We see them bound up in the world; in its business and cares, its pleasures and follies and sins; they are going to destruction—we *know* they are; they stand on its very brink; another breath and they may be gone—gone to the bar of their neglected and offended God, and yet we let them calmly go on, and have not a word to arrest them—not *one* earnest word for Christ! Oh, my Christian reader, will not the blood of thousands be on *our* heads? Will not many an undone sinner, rise up at the bar of God to condemn us? “Oh! if when I was living in carelessness or sin, *you* had warned me. If you had spoken to me of this hell, in which I am now lying. If you had besought me to fly to that Saviour, whose mercy and grace you saw me

daily despising. If, when the cup of carnal indulgence was at my lips, you had only whispered in my ear, "*there's poison in it*"—I might, perhaps, have escaped this torment." Oh, should not our countenances blush at the thought of such conduct to Him who hath done so great things for us! Then, reader, let us never forget the solemn responsibility under which each one of us rests, to testify of Jesus in all ways, at all times, and in all places. Let us have a word for Christ ever ready—a word in season—that will tell on the heart. And let us wait on God for wisdom, strength, and guidance, so to speak, that our words may be with power, and may bring sinners to the knowledge of Jesus.

But let us notice the position the believer is to take, in the midst of this testimony of coming judgment on the world. The Christian is not to *desire* judgment. He is not to call down God's wrath on the world. He is to stand between God and man, as a mediator. He is to beseech man to be reconciled to God, and he is to intercede with God, on behalf of man. He is to pray, even with the full conviction in his mind, that judgment is coming, and will come,—“spare, Lord—have mercy.” This is to be the attitude of the believer, and also of the Church in this world—an ambassador for Christ, with one hand uplifted invoking mercy; and with the other on the brand, snatching it from the burning. This is the place the Prophet now takes in our narrative. “Then said I, Lord, *how long?*” He stands, as the Church should ever stand, between a wrath-proclaiming God and a sin-convicted world, and exclaims, “Lord, how long?” “Stay Thy hand. Spare yet another year, and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”

And let us notice, lastly, the final ending of all this. We have traced the Church's history on earth, both individually and collectively, throughout this remarkable vision. We have traced it, in conviction of sin, in cleansing from sin, in the new creature's desire to labour for Christ, in its testimony against a world lying in the wicked one, in the position it takes in the midst of coming wrath; and now we come to mark the final ending of the Church's history, and the blessed consummation of all her warfare,—the salvation of the elect, the restoration of all things, and the universal blessing of the world. "But yet in it shall be a *tenth*, and it shall return, and shall be eaten; as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." This language may, to some, require a little explanation, in order fully to understand its meaning and application. When the oak and the teil tree, under the influence of the storms and the tempests, have cast their leaves, they *appear* dead. They are not really so, however. There is hidden life in the stock or stem. This hidden life survives all outward shocks, and causes the tree to burst forth and blossom in verdure and beauty, in the coming spring. Now this is the simple explanation of the text. That tree is the Jewish nation. Those storms and tempests are God's judgments. The falling leaves are the wicked generation destroyed. The stock or stem which has "the substance" in it, is God's elect, the hidden remnant, the holy seed. The substance being "eaten" shows that they shall *impart life, strength, and health* to the world, just as food, when eaten, does to the natural body. With this explanation of the text, we can now perceive more clearly the application. We find this "substance" called "*a tenth*." The tenth under

the Jewish law was, as we find on referring to the early parts of the Mosaic ritual, *God's* portion. It was exclusively and peculiarly *His*. How beautiful, then, becomes the application. God has an elect people, a faithful remnant,—the true Church of Christ in all ages. He has also an elect people among the Jews, who shall be the faithful remnant of the latter day. These two are the “tenth,” the holy seed. They shall return, and shall be “eaten.” They shall bud and blossom, and fill the whole world with fruit. When God’s storms and tempests, have swept among the branches of the “oak and the teil tree,” and have scattered the lifeless leaves to the ground, to be trodden under foot, then shall come the world’s spring-time. Then shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His wings. The “teil tree” shall shoot forth into verdure and beauty. That Sun shall no more go down, and “*there shall be no more curse*, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it. And the nations of them that are saved, shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.” “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Blessed consummation! Happy ending to every vision! When eye to eye, and face to face; the Church shall behold her Lord; when all her conflicts shall cease, all her warfare be over, and her victory won. Who would not say, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Who would not long for the day, when earth’s tale of sorrows shall be heard no more; when her sighs, and tears, and blood, the dark and dreary drama of six thousand years, shall give place to joy

and gladness, such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered the heart of man to conceive." Surely it should be the Church's earnest prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus, come *quickly*." Now, more than ever, should it ascend, as we see all things around us, betokening His approach. Now, more than ever, as the streaks of the morning Sun are shedding their beams brighter and brighter across our dark horizon; all telling us that in a few short years, it shall shine in splendour o'er our heads. Now, more than ever, for wakeful, watchful waiting; for gathering up the trailing garment, for burnishing the rusted armour, and putting on the helmet of salvation. Now, more than ever, for a quicker and holier walk with God, a loftier aim towards the prize. Up, children of God, and rouse you from slumber! Wake, brethren, wake; for the Lord is at hand! Look around, and see morning breaking on the hills! Harken to the sound of His chariot wheels in the distance! Up! awake from sleep! Trim your lamps, ye virgins of the Lord! Fill your vessels with oil, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom! "Blessed is that servant whom His Lord when He cometh shall find watching."

But for you, unconverted one, what shall that end be? For you, "the worm which dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." For you "the blackness of darkness for ever." For you, no day-star ariseth, no morning dawneth, no hope cometh. For you, ye unconverted, ye careless, ye lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, ye despisers of God's grace and mercy, ye Christian professors, satisfied with a name to live, while ye are dead,—“cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” Ye have crossed the threshold of the wide gate. Ye are rushing madly along the

broad way. Ye number in your ranks, multitudes and multitudes, whose serpent-trail stretches through the dark vista of six thousand years—the Cains, the Neros, the Robespierres, and the demons of history—a countless host! Think of these, clustering round the devil and his angels, and ye spending a never-ending eternity in company with them! Think of the withered leaves of the teil-tree, scattered by the breath of God's judgments, being bound in bundles, and preserved for ever, in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Reader, this is hell! This shall be the final drama of the world. This shall be the portion of every one not converted to God. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." Ere the curtain falls, haste to the Refuge! Fly to the Ark whose door is still open to receive you. Give not sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have taken shelter within it. Christ Jesus bids you come. The Holy Spirit bids you come. The Church with redoubled cry bids you come. Everything around you and above you bids you come. Come to the Saviour, while His words still ring in your ears, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

THE Church has waited long
 Her absent Lord to see;
 And still in loneliness she waits,
 A friendless stranger she.
 Age after age has gone,
 Sun after sun has set,
 And still, in weeds of widowhood,
 She weeps a mourner yet.
 Come then, Lord Jesus, come!

Saint after saint on earth
 Has lived, and loved, and died,

And as they left us, one by one,
We laid them side by side ;
We laid them down to sleep,
But not in hope forlorn,—
We laid them but to ripen there
Till the last glorious morn.
Come then, Lord Jesus, come !

The serpent's brood increase,
The powers of hell grow bold,
The conflict thickens, faith is low
And love is waxing cold.
How long, O Lord our God,
Holy, and true, and good,
Wilt Thou not judge Thy suffering Church,
Her sighs, and tears, and blood !
Come then, Lord Jesus, come !

We long to hear Thy voice,
To see Thee face to face,
To share Thy crown and glory then,
As now we share Thy grace.
Should not the loving Bride
The absent Bridegroom mourn,
Should she not wear the weeds of grief
Until her Lord return ?
Come then, Lord Jesus, come !

The whole creation groans,
And waits to hear that voice
That shall restore her comeliness,
And make her wastes rejoice.
Come, Lord, and wipe away
The curse, the sin, the stain,
And make this blighted world of ours
Thine own fair world again.
Come then, Lord Jesus, come !

REV. H. BONAR, D.D

EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

GALATIANS II. 20.

ONE of the most remarkable characters in the Bible, and whose history is full of the deepest interest, was the Apostle Paul. Learned, accomplished, of high birth, possessed with powers of reasoning far above many of the learned in our own day; having a deep and intimate acquaintance with mankind, and withal sustained by a moral character, in which the most careful observer could detect no flaw; he was at once the chief of his party, and the pride of his sect. But if his history as a natural man is remarkable, his history as a spiritual man is transcendently so. To see pride of birth, loftiness of intellect, brilliancy of genius, and unimpeachable morality, laid at the cross of Christ, and counting all these and such like attainments, even though a thousandfold multiplied, as "dung" in comparison; is surely no ordinary sight. Yet here we do see it. From the moment the hand of God arrested the persecutor in his murderous career, on the road to Damascus, and prostrated him in the dust; one object alone filled his vision, one Name alone brought all the inner man into exercise—that was the Name of Jesus. For Christ he lived, and for Christ alone. All he did, all he said, all he wrote, had reference to Him. By Him alone he tested the value of everything, and what could not bear that test, found no

place in his reckoning. Whatever work was proposed, whatever plan was suggested, whatever plea was urged, whatever end was contemplated; one question alone was asked—how will it stand in relation to Christ? All his conversations, all his letters, all his addresses, are full of Christ. For one word he says of other things, he says ten of Christ. Truly and faithfully did he carry out in his whole life, the noble resolve of his heart; “I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Christ to Him was everything, and to be found in Christ, was all.

It is this makes the minister, and this only. It is this makes the Church, and this only. It is this makes the Christian, and this only—“What think ye of *Christ*? By this Name alone, all stand or fall, whether in this world or in that which is to come. Leave this Name out, and all the harps of heaven would be unstrung, all the songs of the redeemed would be hushed, and the sweetest anthems of the Church, would be as “sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.”

Let us see what St. Paul says in this portion of Scripture, about himself and about Christ. He makes one statement of great value. He says “I live.” This is not *natural* life, for every man has that. It is spiritual life. It is life eternal. To have this spiritual life implanted in the soul, is a great work. To be able to say “*I have it*”—“I live,” is also great. But we would ask, “How do you know this? From what stand-point do you look at yourself? How have you arrived at this momentous decision?” The Apostle answers, “I am crucified with Christ.” He could never have said, “I live,” if he had not been able to say, “I am crucified with Christ.” This then was his stand-point,

from which he arrived at the momentous conclusion, "I live." This is the only point man can ever take, in settling the question of his soul's salvation; and if he arrive at the Apostle's conclusion from any other, it is only self-deception of the most fearful kind. Standing at the cross of Christ, he can survey the glorious work of redemption, accomplished by the Saviour on his behalf, and exclaim with confidence and thankfulness, "I live."

But it may be asked more particularly, "how can this be so satisfactorily settled from these words? What is the meaning of being 'crucified *with* Christ?'" We reply, Christ died on the cross, on behalf of all those who believe in Him. In the work of redemption, each member of His mystical body, the Church, was united with Him. Each believer is "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh." In Him each suffered. In Him each died. In Him each rose from the dead. In Him each has ascended on high. In all things He was their Substitute—their Representative. This then is what St. Paul means here—"Christ and I are one. Did He suffer for sin? So did I, in Him. Did He pay the full penalty of the broken law? So did I, in Him. Did He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? He put it away for me. Did He bring in everlasting righteousness? It was on my account. Have death, and sin, and the wrath of God, been all put away by the sacrifice of Christ? They are all put away for me. I am crucified with Christ." He never for one moment separates himself from Christ. He looks at the cross, and says "I was there." He looks at the cross, and says, "all that was done by Christ there, was done for me." He looks at the cross, and says "I live." He looks at the cross, and forgets himself in Jesus. From that source alone, flow peace, joy, love, holiness, and

all the precious streams of life into the soul. This is the only ground of abiding peace. What is the cause of much of that uneasiness, and doubt, and fear, that agitates the conscience, and disturbs the peace of many a dear child of God? It is that they do not look simply at the cross, and see themselves represented before God, altogether by Him who died on it. They separate themselves in thought from Christ *Himself*. And while fully admitting the efficacy of His work, and their participation in its effects, they look at themselves as distinct from *Him*. They may believe that Christ in His *work* was their substitute; they do not fully believe that Christ in His *Person* is their substitute. They do not fully realize the truth, that Christ represents them in His Person as well as in His work. If they only looked at themselves, *as Christ before God*, how could there be any room for doubting their acceptance, their completeness, their eternal security? As He is, so is each child of God. Not only has His work made them acceptable, but His own Person represents them before the throne. In seeing *Him*, God sees them. Our peace will rest on a foundation ever liable to be shaken, till we fully grasp this precious truth. Then and only then, when this is apprehended, do we truly take our stand at the cross of Christ. This is to stand in Christ. To stand on any other ground from fear of going too far, from fear of being presumptuous, or on the plea of humility, is to stop short of the soul's true resting place. And if we carefully examine the reasons why men wilfully do so, we shall find that in the majority of cases, pride and not humility, is at the root.

But let us mark the effect of this assurance of salvation in Paul's case. "I live," he says, "*yet not I.*" Here is the deepest humility. Here is the crea-

ture hiding itself in the dust. Here is the Christian's trembling anxiety, lest by any means the eye of his hearer should be diverted, from the Saviour to himself. Every thought of self crucified. Every word in which self is unavoidably introduced, guarded with scrupulous vigilance. Every act of self, watched with unceasing care, lest it should become prominent, and thereby rob Christ of the glory. Oh! this is true holiness. This is the genuine evidence of the Spirit's work in the soul. What a lesson is here for all of us. What a vast amount of secret pride, lodges in the heart of many professing Christians. How stealthily it betrays itself, under the garb of outward humility. How does the "I" shew itself in thought and word and deed. How do many speak of their assurance of salvation in Christ, of their utter renunciation of all human merit, of their completeness in Him through His one offering on Calvary; and yet in their very manner of speaking, in their tone of voice, in the air they assume, and in the spirit which generally characterizes them, when speaking of the things of God, betray unconsciously, all the evidences of a heart filled to overflowing with self. And if a word has been spoken for Christ with any degree of ability, or any deed has been performed on His behalf with apparent success, what inward self-gratulation arises. How do our thoughts dwell on the performance with secret delight. How does the idol exalt itself within, and under the specious web that we have been glorifying Christ, the more effectually conceal itself from view. Christian reader, deceive not yourself with such a thought. Self is living in you, and not Christ. Self is the centre around which your thoughts cluster, and not Christ; and the life of Christ in your soul is fast dying. The life of self and the life of Christ cannot exist together

in the same temple. The one must kill the other. Where Christ lives in the soul at all, He lives supremely. No other sits upon the throne. "Not I," is the language of the heart, of the lips, of the life; "not I, but Christ." This is the language of all in heaven and all on earth. "Not I," is the Christian's continued utterance. "Not I," is the saint's dying exclamation. "Not I," is the Church's noblest theme, her sweetest anthem, her heaven-born melody—"not I, not I, but Christ." It is written on the seraph's brow. It is murmured in the passing breeze. It is inscribed on the meanest flower. It speaks in the mote that dances in the sunbeam, and in the monad that floats unseen in the ocean's drop. All speak one unvarying language, and their distant echoes fall on our listening ears, "not I, not I, but Christ;" "for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, who is over all, God blessed for ever; for Thou, O Lord, hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

But mark the expression, "Christ liveth in me." There is presented to us, in these words, another deeply important truth, and one which must ever remain a mystery, a paradox to the natural man—the indwelling of Christ in the believer's soul. The Bible is very clear on this subject: "*I in them, and thou in me,*" says our blessed Lord. Again, says St. Paul, "Know ye not yourselves, how that *Jesus Christ is in you*, except ye be reprobates." Yes, the weakest believer has Christ dwelling within him. Christ dwelling within him in the person of the Holy Spirit; not as a grace, an attribute, or an influence, but as a person, the third of the ever blessed and glorious Trinity. And having Christ within him, he possesses the fountain of all life, the spring

of joy in all its fulness, the source of strength without measure, and the inexhaustible storehouse for every hour of need. Death can have no victory over him, for there dwells within him One who has said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Sin can never have dominion over him, for on the throne of his heart, He sits who is the Vanquisher of sin, and death, and hell, and who will never depart from it, till He has presented the soul faultless before the throne of God. The fact of Christ's indwelling may not be at all times equally clear, but it is not the less certain. The believer's soul is the Saviour's dwelling-place and kingdom. He lives there to govern it by His sceptre of love, by His influences of truth, by His example of holiness, by his pattern of meekness and humility. He lives there to watch over the seeds He has planted, to revive them when drooping, to quicken them when languishing, and to shield them when assailed by the withering influences by which they are surrounded. Thus does He preserve alive the spark He has kindled, and which, but for His abiding presence there, would be for ever extinguished. Oh, how often has each to confess, that had not the Lord Himself been dwelling within, and, by His own Almighty and unaided power, rekindled the waning light, and breathed upon the dying embers, they had long ago been quenched by the floods of indwelling corruption, and the storms of outward evil. Had not the Lord been dwelling within us, unchanged by all our sins, and iniquities, and hourly provocations, how quickly would the light have become darkness, and the withered bush have been consumed. Marvel not, unconverted reader, if this is a truth you cannot receive or understand. You must become a child of God to understand it. You must become a babe in your own strength, and might,

and wisdom, to appreciate it. You must be brought to the end of all reliance on yourself—emptied of all thoughts of your own righteousness, your own strength and self-sufficiency, and with the conviction deeply rooted in your breast, that Christ is all and you are nothing, before this precious truth can be to you what it ought to be—as living waters to a dry and thirsty soul. Cavil not at this glorious truth. Talk not of conditional grace, of man's free will, of being one day a child of God, and another a child of Satan. No truth so dishonouring to God as this. No truth so robs God of His glory, as this. No statement more opposed to the Word of God, than this. Talk not of man's free will! *Man's* free will is to be *lost*. Man's free will is in a *downward* road. Never was there a soul saved yet, but the pure unaided Omnipotent grace of God did it. Never was there a soul preserved to the end, but the covenant grace and mercy of God, unmixed with any poisonous taint of man's will preserved it. Silence all human reasoning, dismiss all cavillings, and sophistries, and hair-splitting arguments! Lay down your weapons at the feet of sovereign grace! Grace is the ladder to glory, and on every step of it man must die to *self* or he can never reach its summit. Grace is the foundation, and grace the top-stone. Grace is the covenant rainbow that encircles the throne of God. Grace is the coronet on the brow of the redeemed, as he basks in the sunshine of heaven's own light. Grace is the only note that is heard in the mansions on high. Grace is the atmosphere we shall breathe throughout the countless ages of eternity. Grace the canopy that shall spread itself over our heads, and the pavement of the golden streets we shall tread. Grace and only grace.

" Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days ;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

Let us notice another practical truth. " Christ *liveth* in me." It is no *dead* Christ dwelling within. No Christ of mere profession, of form and ceremony without living power. It is Christ living; Christ acting; Christ animating; Christ bringing the whole inner man under His rule and government; Christ manifesting Himself through the avenues of the heart, the thoughts, the lips, the conduct. It is Christ seen and read of all men. Yes, the believer is a *living Christ* among men. Oh, what a practical truth is here! Christ still lives among us; still walks our streets, and towns, and villages, as truly as He did of old. He still lives in our shops, in our counting-houses, in our senate; in our mansions, and hovels, and garrets. Reader, this is Christianity—to live Christ. Perish creeds and doctrines, forms and ceremonies, by the side of this *one* truth. Perish clear views, sound confessions of faith, and all the shibboleths of Churches and sects and systems, here. Perish utterly and for ever, every other test of what is truth, of who is a true child of God, of what is a Christian Church, by the side of this. It is the Church that exalts Christ in her creeds, and manifests Christ most through her living members, that is the true Church of God. It is the Christian that lives Christ in his life and conduct each hour of the day that is the true child of God. Let us never forget this. Let us never cease to proclaim this, for we can never make too much of it. There is a tendency in the present day, to dwell too exclusively on the doctrines of grace; to exalt one truth in our Evangelical preaching at the expense of another;

to forget that the only solid evidence of a Christian is, the *holy life* of a Christian. Say what we will, there is a vast amount of antinomianism, generated by much of the preaching of modern times. The precious doctrine of salvation through grace alone, should never be proclaimed, without proclaiming at the same time its inseparable result—a holy, self-denying, Christ-exalting, Christ-living life. Woe to the preacher or minister of Christ, that exalts one of these truths at the expense of the other. He deceives his flock; he deceives himself; and, as an ambassador for Christ, he utters an uncertain sound. Why is justification by the blood of Christ so much dwelt upon, and sanctification by the Spirit so little proclaimed? Why is Christ's work exalted at the expense of the Spirit's work? Why is the tree separated from the fruit, the blade from the ear, the profession from the life? How is it that men slip into Christianity so easily, into assurance of their own salvation, into clear views of Scriptural truth, and the current Evangelical phraseology of the day; and are almost utterly unconcerned about holy living, as if it were a *secondary* matter? How is it that among many denominations of Christians, profession runs so high, and Christ-*living* runs so low? Is it not attributable to much of the bad teaching of the day? Is it not because *ex-parte* statements of God's Word are dwelt upon, to support our favourite modes of teaching, our pet doctrines, and creeds, and systems? Is it not from the habit of magnifying such portions of Scripture as suit our theories, and glossing over or passing by in silence, so much that would correct those theories and establish us in the truth? Reader, beware of this fatal error. Again we say, Christ is the test of the Church and the Christian.—“Christ *liveth* in me.” You

may safely let every other consideration be merged in this. You may afford, without a single misgiving, to let every other test pass by as unworthy your serious attention. You may stake everything individually or collectively on this, without doubt, or fear, or reserve—"Christ *liveth* in me."

"Christ *liveth* in me!" Solemn and searching test, simple and conclusive standard, just and true measure of one all-important question—"am I a child of God?" Reader, try yourself by this standard. Weigh yourself in this balance, and see whether or not you are wanting! "Does Christ *live* in you?" Oh! of how many a child of God could it once have been said, who may now shew no evidence whatever of that life. How many who did run well, are now hindered! How many who started for the prize, are now far behind, or perhaps walking no more with Jesus! Slumberer on the world's enchanted ground, backslider from thy God, say, how hast thou fallen? What steps in the downward path have landed thee amid the shadows of unbelief, and darkness, and death? Let me endeavour to trace some of the effects of this moral blight in thy spiritual history, some few of the many evidences of the life of Christ waning in the soul.

One of the surest evidences of decline in the spiritual life is neglect of prayer. It may be that the *habit* of prayer is not given up, but the *spirit* of prayer—its freshness, and power, and enjoyment—have gone. You shrink from the thought of living without prayer, of entering on the duties of each day, without prayer, or of drawing your curtains around you at night, without prayer. That would be a step you could not, you dare, not take. The habit generated in your days of first love may remain, but where is the communing with God you once enjoyed, and that

still leaves its sweet recollection in your memory? Now it has become difficult to pray. You feel it irksome, a task, a duty imposed by conscience, and from which you cannot release yourself; but a duty, which, when it has been performed, brings considerable relief to your mind. It was not always so with you. You can remember the time when you could sooner have done without your food, or your sleep, than do without prayer. Prayer was then your vital element. The throne of grace was the sweetest spot on earth. You were often there. And oh, what happy hours you spent with Jesus! You took everything to Him—your sins, your sorrows, your wants, everything little and great in your earthly history—all were taken to Him, and you *talked* with God as a man talketh with his friend. Oh, how precious Jesus was then! How you *knew* Him! How He opened His heart to you! But *now*—what a change has taken place! What coldness and deadness in prayer! What vagrancy of thought! How other thoughts intervene, till you find yourself where you would blush to mention, even on your very knees! How unreal it seems! How you seem to be mocking God instead of praying to Him! How your utterances have become the expression of form, rather than of real desire! You confess sin, but how little is that sin felt! You ask for spiritual graces, or mercies, or blessings, but how little you feel you *need* them! No light of the Saviour's loving countenance, seems to fall upon you now. No whisper of the Spirit, seems to greet you now, as you bend before the mercy-seat. Something tells you that your prayers are unheard, and will be unanswered. Dreary as life may be to you in many respects, nothing is so dreary as the mercy-seat. Oh, what a change! How has

the mighty fallen! How has the strong one become weak!

And what is another evidence of the decline of the life of Christ in the soul, and resulting from this? It is your increasing insensibility to sin. The vile and hateful character of sin, does not affect you as it formerly did. You can do many things now, from which you would once have shrunk. It has ceased to produce in you a holy abhorrence. Its touch does not awaken alarm. Your confession of sin in prayer has become general and heartless, because your conscience has become blunted by secret indulgence in sin. Conscience charges you with crookedness in your actings, with a want of strict truthfulness in your conversation, with a lack of integrity and uprightness in your dealings, with many painful compromises with sin, or with the men of the world, who know not God. You have often bartered the cause of truth for the opinion of men, or for some worldly motive, or for present ease and indulgence. You have gone on secretly transgressing in these *little* ways till your transgression has become *habitual*. Conscience has thus lost its tenderness. You do not recoil from the blighting touch of sin as you used to do, because you have become familiar with it. It was not always so. The least speck of sin used to alarm you. You could find no peace till you had gone and told Jesus. You could not rest till it was all confessed at the mercy-seat, and till you had seen by faith the forgiving smile of your Saviour. Now all is changed. You have *secretly* fallen, notwithstanding the good opinion your Christian friends have of you, notwithstanding the high repute in which you are held by the Church, notwithstanding the clear views you hold, and the precious truths that flow so frequently and fluently from your lips. You have secretly fallen, and you *know*

it. The life of Christ is waning in your soul, and there is a secret misgiving in your conscience that you are on the downward road. The light is growing dimmer and dimmer. Self, and sin, and the world, are growing stronger and stronger, and are taking a firmer hold of you every day. You feel their fangs deep in your soul, and your spiritual life is dying. You feel your peace has gone, your assurance of salvation has gone, your joys, your comforts, your hopes have gone, and you are like a wreck in the midst of multiplying breakers. There is before you a cloud, a dread, a fearful looking forward. Oh, melancholy state! And yet, such is yours.

And what is another evidence of the declining life of Christ, also resulting from these? Your Saviour is not now what He once was to you. You can recollect the time when He was your life, your joy, your all. His Name was to your soul as ointment poured forth. He was "the chiefest of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." How cheerfully you bore His burden, and wore His easy yoke! How you loved His cross, and counted its shame and ignominy your chief joy! How you loved His sanctuary, and loved His people, and longed for the happy seasons to come round, that should bring you into company with them, to speak of Him whose love glowed in your inmost heart! Oh how precious was Christ to you then! Then you *walked* with God. Then "your fellowship was with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Then to "you to live was Christ," and to please Him in all things was your highest aim. You breathed the atmosphere of heaven, and in very deed Christ *lived* in you, and those who came in contact with you owned it, and secretly thanked God for your holy, heavenly influence. But now, Oh, how

changed! The world has got into your heart, and your heart is in the world. Other objects have divided your affections. Your Saviour holds a secondary place there now. He is not what He once was; and if you follow Christ at all, you are following Him like Peter, "afar off." You find no enjoyment in the society of His people. His Word has lost its keen relish for your soul. The services of the sanctuary have ceased to profit you. All have now become tasteless and insipid, and you are ready to exclaim of them "What a weariness is it!" Oh! what sad evidences that the life of Christ is waning within you. And added to all this, darkness has in some measure blinded your eyes to your real state. You have not fallen all at once. Your descent has been gradual and imperceptible—so gradual as to lull all suspicion of your fearful state; so imperceptible as to veil itself from the most searching eye. There is an awful breach between your soul and God. You are standing at a fearful distance from the Saviour. You have lost your sense of pardon. You have left your first love. You have loved the present world and forsaken Christ. You are now standing with the enemies of the cross, whose end is everlasting destruction from the presence of God. And what aggravates your crime, is the stoical indifference which has crept over you. You feel no alarm. You experience no anxiety. You are conscious of no danger. You continue from day to day utterly unconcerned; and it is a matter of very little moment to you whether you are living for Christ or for yourself: whether you are becoming more conformed to Him, or more assimilated to the world. You are in a deep sleep. The life of Christ is fast ebbing out of your soul. The fire has dwindled to a spark, and every moment of your stoical

indifference, threatens altogether to extinguish it. Such is your state.

These are some of the evidences of the low state into which a believer may fall. These are some of the downward steps in the history of many a child of God, in whose soul the life of Christ has ceased to manifest itself. Reader, can you trace *your* history here? Oh! examine faithfully and honestly your heart, and see. Perhaps you stand appalled at the very first glance you take, in the holy duty of searching self-examination. But shrink not from it, painful as it may be. Be honest with your heart, and strive to know its true state. Let all come out to view, scarlet and crimson though the picture may appear. Lay the dark scroll that conscience discloses, at the feet of Jesus. His precious blood can take them all away, though your sins be as the stars for multitude, and dark as the midnight clouds for guilt. Come to Jesus with them all. Come with all your backslidings to Him who will never cast you out. Come, poor prodigal, weary wanderer from thy God, and bend at the feet of Jesus! There is rest for thy burdened spirit there. Come, for Jesus calls thee. Come, for Jehovah welcomes thee. Come, for the Spirit pleads with thee. Come, for thou hast no time to lose. The angel of death is on the wing. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Rise, and retrace thy guilty steps to thy Father's house! Haste, and delay not, for the Judge standeth at the door!

And Oh! awake from slumber, and live no longer at a distance from God. Let the past experience of your life ever act as a salutary warning. Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Live separate from the world. You are not a citizen of it, but of heaven.

Let your life be a rebuke to its ungodliness. Let your holiness, and uprightness, and integrity, reprove its crooked policy, its selfish schemes, its sinful maxims and principles. Break off every known sin. Strike at its root. Slay every evil passion, every unholy thought, every sinful desire. Let not the sin which dwelleth in you, bring you again into bondage. Slay *it*, or else it will slay the life of Christ in *you*. Tamper not for one moment with any of its advances. You have a kingdom and a crown to win, and you have to fight for them. You have to force your path to glory through foes of the worst kind, and that beset you on every side. "Put on the whole armour of God," and fight as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, and you shall then be more than conqueror through His grace, which shall preserve you in safety to the end.

But now let me pass to another portion of the text. Mark how the life of Christ in the soul is sustained. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live *by the faith of the Son of God*." What is faith? It is "the *evidence* of things not seen." It is heaven's sight. It is that sight that makes unseen things real, and ever present to view, as real as though seen by the natural eye—nay, much more so. This is faith. This is the faith of the Son of God. Under this the believer lives. Unseen things are ever present to his view. He sees them. He is persuaded of them. He is influenced by them. He sees an unseen Saviour. He looks for an unseen kingdom. He is under the guidance of an unseen Spirit. His heart is animated by prospects, and cheered by hopes, and strengthened by encouragements, and supported by promises, all of which are unseen. All his inner man lives in another world than the present one, and everything in this life, "the life which he now lives

in the flesh," is influenced by it. Thus it is that the spiritual life within him is sustained. He lives "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him." Oh, what a world is that which bursts on the Christian's view, when he is translated from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son! How everything in the world of sense in which he had before been shut up, pales before it! What nonentities are all its power and greatness, its grandeur and magnificence! How does "the unseen and eternal" reveal the fictitious value that is set on the seen and temporal! How does it check the undue estimate we are so prone to form, of things which are but for a moment. Oh! there can be no *true* estimate of anything in this world till man's heart and affections have been translated to another. Everything is, and must be, counterfeit, till placed side by side with the unseen and eternal. The light that faith casts on all things here is the light of *truth*, and everything is a *lie* without it. It is the light of the sanctuary which leads us to exclaim, as we look on the votaries of the world, all panting in its eager chase, "Surely every man walketh in a vain shadow. Surely they are disquieted in vain. Verily every man living, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." Yet strange as it may appear, poor foolish man chases these shadows with desperate earnestness. He struggles and pants for its shadowy honours, its fading riches, its evanescent pleasures. He spends three score years and ten, in the phantom chase—his eyes blinded by their false glitter, and his heart captivated by their gilded colours. Nor ought we to wonder at it. Circumscribed as he is by things of sense, and a stranger to the world of faith, is it surprising? Is it not an evidence of his fallen nature? Is it not the region of a heart under the

dominion of sin? Is not the treasure where the heart is? Is not the present world with all its shadows, the present life with all its vexations and disappointments, everything to him? The world he is travelling to, is unknown and unseen. The present world, with all its drawbacks, is something *tangible*. Who can wonder, if mistaking the unreal for the real, he should grasp at the shadow and let go the substance? So you do, so you must do, and so you must *continue* to do, unconverted reader, till God opens your eyes. It is your nature, and we marvel not at it.

But is there no danger to the child of God? Is he not liable to be attracted too much with the glitter and glare of this unreal world? Alas! he is. When faith wanes in the soul this must be so. The world's fictitious radiance is the Christian's deadliest snare. How it pushes out of view, things unseen and eternal! How it damps our spiritual energies, and cripples our heavenly walk! How it deprives the Christian Sampson of his locks, and leaves him open to his secret foes! Christian reader, beware of it! It lies in ambush on every side of you. It follows you into every scene and occupation. It lurks beside all your duties. It secretes itself in your very chamber. It comes not as an open foe. It makes stolen marches on your soul. Beware of it! Live in the world of faith. Let not the oppressive nearness of things of time and sense, ring too loudly on your ear. The presence of God is the only antidote. Be familiar with that. Live by faith on the Son of God, and you will then have a heavenly pavilion. You will then truly and safely live.

And what is the great stimulus of this life of faith? The love of Christ. So says the Apostle, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who *loved me*." Yes, there is no motive so faith-strengthening,

so faith-supporting as the love of Christ. Thus St. Paul speaks in another place, "the love of Christ *constraineth* us." But for this, faith would often fail. But for this, the spiritual life would often wane. But for this, the wheels of the Christian's heavenly chariot would often drag heavily. "The love of Christ *constraineth*." It sets all the affections in motion. It draws all the thoughts upward. It breathes life upon the dying. It quickens the dead. Faith brings the distant near; the love of Christ makes the distant *mine*. Faith enables me to *see*; the love of Christ enables me to *embrace*. Faith enables me to see Christ; God's love shed abroad in my heart enables me to say Christ is *mine*. Oh, what motive in heaven or earth so powerful such a stimulus to faith as this! O, truth, should not this be most precious, most divine, most omnipotent! "He *loved* me!"—can I then withhold myself from devotion to Him? Can I then shut myself up? Can I then refrain from laying the sacrifice, "the reasonable service," on the altar, to Him who loved me so? Lord, take me and use me for Thy glory! As Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, where Thou wilt! Saviour, I am Thine, for Thou has won me by Thy love!

"Who loved *me*!" What a precious assurance! What a comfort when the *world* frowns upon us! What an antidote to sorrow and trial! What a staff to lean upon in the valley of the shadow of death! Oh, who would be without it! What would this world be, but for these precious, precious words! What would heaven itself be but tinsel and dross! What would the mourner's lot be, but for this! What would the martyr's stake be but for this! What would the dying pillow be, but for this. What would the Christian's life be, but for this—"He *loved* me." Talk of *assurance* of salvation! What is salvation, if man cannot be assured of the love of Christ! What is religion worth

if you cannot say, "He loved *me*?" What have you been living for all these years if you cannot say, "He loved *me*?" What has your religion done for you—your prayers, your tears, your rites and ceremonies, your duties and observances—what have they all done for you if you cannot say, "He loved *me*?" Oh! poor, shallow, empty, good for nothing religion! away with it if thou hast never enabled my poor, thirsting, panting soul to say, "He loved *me*!" Blessed be God's Holy Name for this *assurance*, for this precious truth, precious above all others!

But mark the expression "He loved *me*." Not my sins, not my many transgressions, not my wilfulness waywardness and obstinacy, not my past life of ingratitude and provocation! No. He looked upon all these with righteous and holy abhorrence. He hated all these things, but He loved *me*—He loved my soul. And what proof did he give of this? The Apostle answers, "He loved me, and gave *Himself* for me." Oh wondrous gift! He gave not His kingdom, not His crown, not His glory, not His boundless wealth! He gave up these indeed, "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich;" but, marvellous grace—"He gave *Himself*!" He gave Himself to Pilate's judgment, to Herod's mockery, to the soldiers' scorn, to the people's frenzy! And there He hung between two thieves, His piercing cry rending the blackened vault above, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" There He hung, His face marred more than any man's, His head, His hands, and His feet, pierced and bleeding, torn and mangled with the iron fangs and the thorny crown! There He hung, under the frown of heaven, and cast out by the world; the taunt and sneer of the

passer-by, and the song of the drunkard in the streets! And He gave Himself to *this*!—oh, the love of God, the grace of Jesus! Oh that these words were written on the portals of the sky, in the hues of the rainbow and the brightness of the sun, so that every sinner on earth might read them, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Precious, precious words! Sinner, dost thou need encouragement to come to Jesus? Then here it is. Perhaps you look back on your past life, and you see it stained with crimes of the deepest dye. You see sins, the very thought of which suffuses your countenance with a blush. You see sins against light, wilful sins, secret sins, open sins—a multitude that no man can number, rising like a mountain to your view, and you are ready to exclaim, “can God love *me*?” Impossible! Yes, He does, He loves *you*. He hated all these things, but He loved you, and loves you still. “He loved you, and gave Himself for you.” Oh! come then to that Saviour, and let nothing keep you back. Wait not till you are better, till you are more fit for Him. Wait for nothing. Come, just as you are. He is willing and waiting; why should *you* delay. “This man receiveth sinners” is the name and character by which He is known. “This man receiveth sinners” is written in legible characters over the mercy-seat inviting you to draw near. “This man receiveth sinners” is the gospel echo which sounds aloud from Calvary, and has been re-echoed for the last two thousand years. Listen, sinner, to the sound! Let its melody fall on thy weary and heavy-laden heart! It shall fill thy soul with gladness! It shall fill thy lips with praise! Angels,

bending over the battlements of heaven shall hail thy spiritual birth, and there shall be joy unspeakable in the realms of the blest. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance."

Christian reader, "forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind." Christ was crucified for you in order that you should crucify yourself. Christ was crucified for you that you should crucify sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Remember *your* part in this matter. Fulfil the great trust committed to you. Shine as a light in the world. Crucify sin. Mortify your evil members. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Bear your Saviour's cross. The cross is your salvation. The cross is your badge. The cross is your glory. The cross is your all. Then carry it, and let your language ever be, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet, not I, but Christ, liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

NEARER, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee—
Nearer to Thee.

Though like a wanderer,
 My sun gone down;
Darkness comes over me,
 My rest—a stone;
Yet, in my dreams, I'd be
Nearer, my God, to Thee—
 Nearer to Thee.

There let my way appear,
 Steps unto heaven;
All that thou sendest me,
 In mercy given;
Angels to beckon me
Nearer, my God, to Thee—
 Nearer to Thee.

Then with my waking thoughts,
 Bright with Thy praise;
Out of my stony griefs,
 Bethel I'll raise;
So, in my woe, to be
Nearer, my God, to Thee—
 Nearer to Thee.

And when, on joyful wing,
 Cleaving the sky;
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
 Upwards I fly;
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee—
 Nearer to Thee.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN IV. 1—30.

It is noon. The morning sun has risen in all its splendour behind the Western hills of Judea, and has ascended to its height. Nature droops beneath its scorching rays. The traveller from his distant march, or the peasant from his morning toils, may be seen here and there reclining beneath the grateful shade of the fig-tree, or seeking the stream to cool their feverish thirst. We leave behind us the murmur and din of the busy city, and arrive at the small village of Shechem, or Sychar, about forty miles distant, and, descending to a secluded glen outside, we behold a weary traveller reclining for repose upon the stone at the well's mouth. The jaded expression in His eye, the look of languor and weariness on His countenance, the dust so thick upon His sandals and the heavy drops of sweat that hang on His brow, betoken a long and toilsome journey. He is dressed in the garb of a Jew, and early in the day He has left His native city of Judea and reached this quiet spot, having travelled upwards of forty miles. On the opposite bank we can descry a woman coming down the mountain side towards the well, carrying a pitcher on her shoulder. She comes to draw water for the evening meal. She approaches the spring, and lays down her pitcher; but she has scarcely done so, when she is accosted by the unknown One at her side, who asks for a drink of water. Startled at such

an appeal from One, from all intercourse with whom, she was debarred by the severe conventionalities of the Jewish religion, she gazes on Him with unfeigned surprise. We continue to look. The pitcher lies unfilled, and the two seem engaged in deep and earnest conversation. Time passes on, and presently she trips up the mountain side with alacrity, leaving her waterpot unfilled, regardless alike of the well and the purpose for which she had come to it. What deep secret has been passing between them to produce such unexpected results? What can that earnest conversation have been about? Let us look at the narrative and see. Let us turn aside and behold a wondrous sight, the Lord of life and glory communing at Jacob's well with a sinful outcast of Samaria.

We are told at the opening of the chapter that "when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that He made and baptized more disciples than John, He left Judea and departed again into Galilee." Driven from his home by the tormenting jealousy of this self-righteous, vain, and exclusive sect, He bent His steps towards Galilee. To that "land of darkness and the shadow of death," in comparison with favoured Judea, the Saviour had often repaired when driven from His own, "who received Him not," and had found repose and refreshment for His tried and suffering spirit. The common people heard Him gladly. The fishermen from their nets, and the labourers from their toils clustered around His feet to hear the loving, gracious words that distilled from His lips. Many an aching bosom had found repose at His feet, many a down-trodden flower had reared its head and revived under the bright beams of this Sun of Righteousness. Yes, in outcast "Galilee of the Gentiles" the Lord of life and glory had often been refreshed

in spirit. Among the sinful and outcast, the heart-broken and sorrowful, the sick and the dying, His name was as the dews of heaven to the dry and thirsty land. They lingered on His footsteps, they hung upon His words, they followed Him up the mountain side and to the sea-shore in thousands, and seemed as if some mystic spell rivetted them to the spot. In many a heart in Galilee, the testimony of the Roman officer found a deep response, "Never man spake like this man." No wonder, then, if His voice were often heard in their streets, or their thresholds often visited by His footsteps. There He found that meat to eat which the world knew not of, in fulfilling His Father's will. Thither He now repaired. Owing to its situation, he had of necessity to pass through one or two places on His way. One of these was the city of Samaria, which lay directly in His path. "He must needs go through Samaria." Before we pass on, let us pause and notice one or two spiritual features in this deeply-interesting narrative.

At the very opening of the chapter, we have brought before us the manner in which God generally acts in the accomplishment of His great designs. Samaria lay in the Saviour's path, and there appears no other reason than a natural one why He should have to pass through it. But Nature and Providence are the mediums through which God invariably acts in grace. The "needs" in this case was Samaria; spiritually it was to convey the message of salvation to one poor soul lost in ignorance and sin, and through her to multitudes of others. This is the manner in which we are to trace God's hand in all the events of life. The age of miracles has gone by. Nature and Providence are the vehicles through which God speaks to us. It is thus that He hallows the means, and proclaims Himself the God

of Nature, Providence, and Grace. We, in our short-sightedness, look for something more than this. Though we may not expect miraculous agency, yet we often expect God will answer our prayers, or interfere in our behalf, in such a way as to make His interference palpable to us. He *may* do so, but rarely. We should not look for it. He would have us look through the natural, to behold the spiritual. If He would speak to a Prophet, and through him to a heathen nation, it is through a worm, a fish, an east wind, a gourd. If He would speak to a fruitless religious nation, it is through a fig tree. The parables are themselves a confirmation of this. They are used by the Saviour as a medium for conveying spiritual truths. They are God speaking through nature to man. We can see infinite wisdom in all this. Our infidel notions would look upon this medium as beneath God. We look upon natural events, particularly if they are what we would call trifling, as accidents. When will Christians be convinced that there is nothing trifling in any event that happens. We can conceive no other reason why the Saviour should, in all His addresses, use the parabolic mode of teaching, than to correct the false and unhealthy tendency of the mind to separate nature from God. This is what we may learn from the "needs" that led Him to Samaria. It was to meet this poor outcast woman at the well. It was to arrest her in her career of guilt and sin, and to make her a monument of saving mercy. It was to reveal her own heart to herself, and to reveal Himself to her heart. It was for this He travelled forty miles that day, under the scorching rays of an Eastern sun. It was for this he flung Himself, weary and exhausted at Sychar's well, and waited the sound of approaching footsteps. It may be said, "how strange for

the Son of God to come so far to meet one, and one of such a character." It is strange. But this is *grace*, and grace is a strange and wondrous thing. It knows no barriers. It sees no bounds. It brought the Son of God from heaven to earth to save a guilty, fallen world. Oh why should it not bring Him from Judea to Sychar's well to save *one* poor outcast there! It did this, and does more than this. Let us never be surprised at what grace does. Man would not do it, but God is not like man. Man would not have the patience, but the God-Man would, and found it meat and drink to His spirit to do so.

And behold Him now at that well! See the dust upon His sandals and the sweat on His brow! Mark the air of languor and weariness on His countenance, and the jaded expression in His eye! See how He flings Himself down, wearied and exhausted with His toilsome journey, at its mouth! Oh what a picture of our true humanity! What human susceptibilities and sympathies lay beneath that wearied Man! What depths of human tenderness and feeling were shrouded in that tried and suffering bosom! What love and grace and mercy, blended together in that countenance marred more than any man's! Oh! if I want to be assured that Jesus knows my frame and remembers that I am dust; if I want to know that He enters into my deepest sorrows, and understands the weakness, and weariness, and lassitude of this frail body, I go in spirit to the well of Sychar, and there I behold the Saviour of the world overcome with fatigue, and reclining at its mouth, glad of rest as the humblest son of earthly toil, and craving a drink of water to assuage His thirst. There I behold Him, in very truth, God in *my* nature, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." There I feel indeed that "I have not an High

Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of my infirmities, but who was in all points tempted like as I am, yet without sin." Hunger, thirst, weariness, weakness, suffering and sorrow, all found their way to His heart. In every step of His earthly path we may read the deeply-graven superscription of His life, "Behold the man."

Let us now glance for a moment at the woman, and the purpose for which she had come to the well. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water." The earthly water and waterpot expressed the thing which occupied her mind, and for which she lived—the present life. She thought of nothing higher. The present life—its duties, demands, and necessities, so filled her mind, that there was no room whatever for a thought of "living water." True, indeed, these were *lawful* and *necessary* things, but the lawful and necessary things of this life so filled her thoughts, that there was no room for Christ. The Lord spoke to her of the "living water," the "living well," the "water springing up into everlasting life," the water, which if a man drank thereof, he should "never thirst," still she understood not. She could not conceive what He meant. She continued to confound it with the well and the waterpot before her. There was on her mind a veil of thick darkness, so that she misinterpreted all He said. The present life, for which alone she lived, had so absorbed her mind and heart, that not a ray of light could enter as to any other. As we read our Lord's conversation with this woman, how forcibly are we reminded of the Apostle's words, "the natural man *receiveth* not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he *know* them; they are foolishness unto him." What a dark cloud intercepted the glorious Gospel of Christ from shining in her heart. Yet

hers is no uncommon case. It is a type of every mind in its natural state. With all its intelligence on other subjects, it exhibits the same ignorance about the things of the Spirit of God as she did. The divine verdict on the natural mind in its very best state, is given in few but expressive words, "dead in trespasses and sins;" "at enmity with God;" "having the understanding darkened."

Such then was her state. And how does the Lord Jesus act? Could we have marvelled, if, wearied and exhausted with His toilsome journey, He had declined to enter into conversation with her? Should we have thought it unkind if He had rebuked this thoughtless intrusion on His weariness and fatigue, instead of at once refreshing His exhausted frame with a draught from the spring, or if He had administered a gentle reproof for her ignorance and want of comprehension? We should not. So man *would* have acted. But God is not like man. No reproof escapes the Saviour's lips. No remonstrance is heard. No frown darkens His brow at her ignorance. How beautifully and accurately is His character portrayed by the inspired Penman of Israel, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and *gently lead* those that are with young."

And what does this teach us? Does it not shew that sinful, blind, and ignorant as we are, we can never go out of season to Christ? Who needed repose more than He? Who needed sympathy and succour more than He, driven from His native home by the jealousy of its rulers, and compelled to seek refuge among the rocks and mountain ravines of Galilee, or beneath the humble roof of some of the Samaritan peasantry? Yet, behold, at this most unseasonable and trying moment, how He opens His heart to her ignorance and helplessness! See

how gently and lovingly He leads her into the knowledge of Himself, never withdrawing from her side till she is able to rejoice in Him as her Lord and Saviour, and, in the deeper joy which filled His heart that one poor outcast was brought home to the fold, forgetting even His own bodily necessities, the draught of cold water from the well! Oh unselfish, untiring nature of Jesus! How unlike all human hearts is Thine!

“Who is a pard’ning God like Thee,
Or who has grace so rich and free.”

And as we pass by the well of Sychar, what a sight do we behold! The Saviour of the world is there. And what is He doing? He is sitting alone with a guilty, outcast sinner, settling the great question of eternity with her. He is revealing her heart to herself, and then revealing Himself to her heart. This is just what He does now to every soul whom He draws to Himself. He sits *alone* with them. He leads them into some knowledge of their own hearts, and then reveals to them in whose presence they stand, and draws them to ask for the “living water,” which He had prepared for them. Thus, as He led her, so does He lead each one now into all truth, never withdrawing Himself from them till they are enabled to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have become “vessels of mercy” to make known the riches of His grace to others.

One more feature as we pass on to the conversation. “Jesus saith unto her, give me to drink.” We have, in these few words, sovereign grace beautifully brought before us. It is Christ that first speaks to the woman, and not the woman to Christ. It is God seeking man, not man seeking God. This is *grace*. This is the

good old Gospel story, which we have heard from the beginning. God came down to seek and to save lost Adam. Adam never sought God ; nay, he ran away and hid himself from Him. Christ came down to seek and to save ruined man. Man never sought Christ ; nay, he cried out, "away with Him ; crucify Him." Precious truth, reader, for you and me ! But see how wonderfully that grace is enhanced in this picture at the well. Not only is Jesus seeking the outcast, but He is willing to be a *debtor* to her, in order to win her soul. Truly such grace is amazing ! It is so unlike everything in this world, that we can hardly wonder men are unable to understand and receive it. The glorious God-Man travelling forty miles under the scorching rays of an Eastern sun, to meet one poor guilty outcast, and willing to be a debtor to her, in order to win her soul ! How wonderful ! Marvel not, reader, this is only *grace*. This is "the grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men." Man does not understand it, nor did this woman. "*How is it* that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria ? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." She looked at the Saviour merely as a Jew, and marvelled at His grace. How much more would she have marvelled had she known His *true* character ! Little as she saw, however, she could not understand it. "*How is it,*" she asks, and her perplexed question has been the echo of the natural mind ever since. "*How is it*" are marked in his looks of surprise, as he hears the free and full Gospel proclaimed in his ears. "*How is it*" he murmurs within himself, as we speak of the inward peace and joys and hopes of the Christian. "*How is it*" he continues to utter as the deep

things of the Spirit of God are again and again explained to him—"how is it; I cannot understand it." Oh what a riddle, what a paradox, what a mystery, is the spiritual life to fallen man!

And notice here the striking contrast of the present dispensation with the former one, disclosed to us in this woman's answer. Grace was the bringing in of a new dispensation, as contrasted with the legal one. The characteristic feature of the Mosaic ritual was, that the sinner must meet God's requirements. He must come up to God's standard. The priest was not to *leave the holy place*, and go into the defiled one, in order to heal the leper. No. The leper was to be *brought to* the priest, and He was to look at him *from a distance*. This was the characteristic feature of the dispensation. It was man coming up to God, not God coming down to man. The woman's answer reflected this feature of the Mosaic ritual — "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." The holy could not deal with the unholy. The priest could not go to the leper. But now all is changed. The great High Priest, the Son of God, has left the most holy place, even heaven itself, and come down into this leprous world of ours to seek and to save the lost one. And oh, how suited is this grace to sinful man! How adapted to his lost and ruined state! If any thing may be called *new*, this is the new thing among men. This is the "new song" of heaven. This shall fill the lips of redeemed myriads throughout the everlasting ages of eternity!

"Grace is the sweetest sound,
That ever reached our ears."

But mark the next point in the narrative. "Jesus

answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the *gift* of God, and *who* it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." The Lord here shows her her ignorance of spiritual things, and her fallen; lost condition. "If thou knewest the *gift* of God, and *who* it is." These are the two great things man is ignorant of. He is ignorant of *Christ*, and of Christ's *life*. And this ignorance is an evidence of his fallen condition. Had the woman been in her right state, *she* would have asked the Lord for that water, and not the *Lord* have asked her. This is what the Lord means by these words. Grace, although "the sweetest sound that ever reached our ears," is the evidence of man's fall. Had he not fallen he would not have needed it. Had she not been a guilty, fallen creature, the Lord would never have had occasion to seek her. *She* would have asked *Him* for that living water. "If thou knewest, thou *wouldest* have asked." Yes, if the sinner only knew Christ, and what that spiritual life is, he would. He *could not help* asking. It is such precious knowledge. It reveals such a precious Saviour. It gives such precious peace, he could not but ask for it. This explains the meaning of 1 John ii. 4. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." To *know* God, is to love Him and to follow Him. To *know* God, is to ask for His spiritual graces and gifts. We, in speaking of each other, and of worldly things, separate knowledge from love and obedience. We say, "a man knows but he does not practice." The Word of God recognizes no such distinction. To know Christ, is to love Him. Knowledge and obedience are inseparable; they are cause and effect. "If thou *knewest*, thou *wouldest* have asked," says

the Saviour to the woman, and thus corroborates the Apostle's testimony. And equally certain is the fulfilment of the promise. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He *would* have given thee living water." Yes, "He would," for "He is faithful that promised." "He would," for He has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will *in no wise* cast out." "He would," for so He said to His backsliding people of old—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often *would I* have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not*." Yes, "*He* would," unconverted reader, but *thou* wouldest not. Such is God, and such also, is man. He has destroyed himself, he continues to destroy himself, he *loves* to destroy himself, and God's voice sounds aloud in his ears, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found." Grace follows him in spite of all his perversity with the cry, "in me," "in me," and will follow him to the very end of his journey.

"The woman saith unto Him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." These are very solemn words. The Saviour doubtless referred, not only to the water of the well, but to that of which it was a symbol—everything earthly from which the creature is prone to seek satisfaction. His words have a much larger application and deeper signification, than the water of the well then before Him. And

oh how true of everything earthly are they ! How true in the experience of multitudes, both of those who truly know the Lord, as well as of those who know Him not. Over every stream of earthly happiness, we may see the words legibly written, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Lover of the world, shall we appeal to you for a proof of this ? You have sought repose for your thirsty spirit, have sought it eagerly, have sought it for years. Say, what has been your experience ? You have plunged with your whole heart into one stream of amusement after another—the evening's fascinations, the swell of the oratorio, the giddy mazes of the dance, the midnight revel, the delirious excitements, of the gay and fashionable and brilliant world around you. Have they satisfied your thirsty spirit ? Have they filled up the aching void in your soul ? Are you happy ? Oh that aching heart, that heaving bosom, that restless pillow, that anxious look, all too plainly reveal that happiness is not here ! Lover of pleasure more than lover of God, dost thou ask the reason ? Hear it then from the lips of the Saviour Himself, "Whosoever drinketh of *this* water shall thirst again."

Man of mind, revelling in the *intellectual* world, shall we next appeal to you ? You have completed your discovery, you have solved your problem, you have explored the hidden depths of some untrodden region of wisdom and knowledge, you have become a competitor for some earthly prize and have won it ; the laurels of victory have been placed upon your brow amid the plaudits of the learned, the wise, the great, the noble. Say, are you satisfied ? Have the garlands on your brow filled up the cravings of your longing heart ? Is there no *want* there ? Can you say, "now I am satisfied ; let the

wheel stop." Ah no! We follow you into the privacy of your inner chamber, when the intoxication of success is over, and the burning flush of victory has subsided, and the mind and heart are left alone for self-examination and reflection. What means that deep drawn sigh? What means that restless spirit? What means that unhealthy excitement, that want of calmness on the brow and repose in the heart, betraying what you so vainly struggle to conceal? Read, O man of mind, "the hand-writing on the wall" and its solemn interpretation, "Whosoever drinketh of *this* water shall thirst again."

Shall we look at the world on its brighter side? Shall we look at its *lawful* enjoyments, its endearments and friendships, its social delights and comforts, its mercies and blessings in a providential point of view? Say, ye who have drunk of its sweetest draughts, who have culled its choicest flowers, who have reposed in its sunniest spots, and pressed fondly to your bosom the costliest blessings that God can bestow among His temporal gifts,—have they *satisfied* you? Have the gifts and blessings from God's hand, and to which you have clung with such fond affection, left nothing more for your heart to desire? Have you no more thirst, no more longings within to be met? Ah! the gifts of God exclaim, "Am I in *God's* stead?" They utter their voice in words that none can misunderstand or misinterpret, "Whosoever drinketh of *this* water shall thirst again."

But we turn to the *religious* world. We appeal to the nominal professor of religion. You have sought rest for your troubled conscience. You have been unremitting in all your religious duties, your formal prayers, your punctilious observances, your ostentatious charities to the poor, and your regular attendance at the sanctuary, and you have in some

measure pacified your conscience. You secretly congratulate yourself on your goodness and righteousness, and your moral superiority to the drunkard, the profligate, or the abandoned, that you see around you. You retire to your midnight couch. Troubled dreams disturb your repose. You awake and think of the bar of God before which you must shortly stand. You cast a glance into that awful eternity at your door. Conscience is troubled and uneasy. You move restlessly on your pillow. You strive to banish from your thoughts the appalling vision. What! have all your religious observances and duties, your prayers and fastings, your earnest hard-working efforts to obtain peace, your best obedience, and your conscious sincerity of heart, failed to take away the sting from death, to smooth your visions of a dying pillow, to give your spirit repose, in the prospect of eternity? Is there, after all, no peace, no calmness, no happiness, no real satisfaction within? Ah no! Human righteousness can offer no repose for an immortal spirit. Outward religion, its duties and observances, its forms and ceremonies, its showy ritual and external pageantry, are but painted bubbles in a dying hour. They cast no bright hope of glory round the dying pillow. They are but earthly streams, and broken cisterns, and withered gourds. Over each and all the undying memorial is inscribed for man to read, "Who-soever drinketh of *this* water shall thirst again."

Alas, that dying men should pant so eagerly for the painted glories of this unsatisfying world! Alas! that many, yea most, should drink so deeply of these earthly streams when the "living water" is so full, so rich, so free! And what in a few brief years will it all come to?—a death bed without hope, an eternity unprepared for,

a corpse, a shroud, a grave! All that the world can give, apart from Christ, can never satisfy the soul. You may as well try, like the child seen by Augustine on the sea-shore, to put the whole ocean in the little hole made in the sand with its tiny fingers, as try to fill up the depths of man's immortal being with the nonentities of earth. He was born for nobler things, and nothing else can satisfy him. A being made by God, and in God's glorious image, can be satisfied with nothing but God.

Where, then, is the source from which man's immortal spirit can be truly met? Only in the Saviour's reply, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." Millions on millions who have never been converted to God, and who have never cared about conversion, have yet come to endorse the words of the Saviour in their dying hour, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." They have been the dying wail of multitudes, yea, of every one who has turned his back upon God. They are the words of One who cannot lie, and who has uttered them with a *certainly* that nothing can gainsay, "Whosoever drinketh of this water *shall* thirst again," and bitterly, most bitterly, has the God-forgetting heart felt their truth. But though this be so, there are multitudes on the other hand, who can bear testimony to the Saviour's truth, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, *shall never thirst.*" They have experienced the preciousness of Christ in their own hearts. They have felt, when every earthly stream has dried up, when every earthly cistern has been broken, when the very light of heaven above them has become darkness, that they had a joy within which no man could take from them. They never thirsted, though not a stream was near. They never were in want, though a wilderness

was on every side of them. They were never overcome with drought, for the well of living water was *within* them. They were as a tree planted by rivers of waters. Their leaf did not fade. Their fruit did not wither. Joy had its well-spring in their hearts, and they were full of joy.

But mark the significant and beautiful figure under which this "living water" is described. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a *well* of water, springing up into everlasting life." A "well of water" is that which has its resources in itself. It is independent of outward circumstances. Summer's drought cannot dry it, winter's frost cannot bind it. Such is the character of the "living water" in the believer. He has joy within him when outward things are sorrowful. His spiritual sky is bright and gladdening, when his temporal horizon is dark as midnight. His spiritual streams flow fastest and freshest when his earthly streams are all dried up. Dark and dreary as everything may be around him, he knows that his "house is not so with God." All things are right there. His treasure is in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt," and where nothing can touch it. Christ loves him, and in the love of Christ he rejoices, because he knows that, unlike all human friends, "having loved His own which were in the world, *He* loves them to the end." "Who can separate him from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things he is more than conqueror through Him that loves him. For he is persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his

Lord." Reader, this is the "well of living water" in the soul! Have you got it? Do you know anything experimentally of this joy, this peace, this love of Christ "springing up" within you? Oh what a dreary wilderness life is without it! What a false glitter! What a poisoned stream! What a vain show! What a splendid nothing! Reader, are you living for this life or the next? Is your treasure and your heart in heaven, or amid the shadowy nonentities of this poor, dying world? Are you a runner in the heavenly race, or, dazzled by the false glare of the world, are you in eager chase of the gilded toys it is holding out to its deluded myriads? In the name of my heavenly Master, and by all the terrors of the judgment seat of Christ, before which reader and writer shall shortly stand, I ask, where are you?

But the resources of a well are *hidden*. Its streams rise and flow, refresh and gladden, but no eye sees the spring whence they take their rise. All its resources are out of sight—hidden from the eye of man. So is it with the Christian. He is a hidden man. His "life is hid with Christ in God." His joys are hidden joys. His peace is a hidden peace. His hopes are hidden hopes. The world sees them not, nor understands them. They are "foolishness" to it. It knows him not, because it knew not his Saviour. He is as yet a hidden man. But "when Christ, who is his life shall appear, then shall he also appear with Him in glory." Till then, however, he must be as his Master, hidden and unknown. And this well of water "springs up into everlasting life." The streams of spiritual life within, are continually flowing up to their source, Christ Jesus. There is an unceasing stream descending from Christ into his soul, and returning from his soul to

Christ. This is what passes between them, unseen to mortal eye, and unknown to any but God Himself. The well of water "springs up," and will continue to spring to the end. Christ is his life, and his life is in Christ; and his daily cry is, "all my springs are in Thee."

But the woman cannot understand the Saviour, notwithstanding His explanation. She says, "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." She cannot divest her mind of the waterpot and the well. She stumbles at every step, and only displays more clearly the inability of the natural mind to understand God. Her mind was so full of earth and earthly things, represented by the waterpot and the well, that she could not see *who* it was that was speaking to her, nor *what* it was that He was pressing on her attention. Thus it is that the natural mind is blinded, and drawn off from the things of God by the things of time and sense. Satan uses these things as instruments in his hands to keep the soul from Christ. Let the instrument be what it may, if only a *waterpot*, providing that it draws the mind away from the apprehension of spiritual things, his end is gained. It may be innocent amusements, worldly gain, family duties, or the lawful callings of life, it matters not what. A *waterpot* will do just as well as a *throne*, if it only blind the eyes to the knowledge of Jesus.

Reader, I want to ask you a solemn question, as you read these pages. Is there nothing in your history that is thus keeping you from knowing Christ, and from giving yourself up to Him? It may be harmless, or innocent, or even praiseworthy, but is it secretly operating on your heart's affections, or unduly occupying your attention so as to keep you from Him? Is there anything *this day*, no matter what—family duties, or lawful engagements—that is holding

your soul back from Him ? Perhaps something less even than a waterpot is doing this. Perhaps what has hitherto been keeping you from Christ is not any particular sin, or any obstinate unbelief, but the undue occupation of the mind with some little thing, or a succession of them. These are the instruments Satan uses to accomplish his purpose. It may be safely affirmed that it is not sin or unbelief, but the undue occupation of the mind with the innocent or lawful things of life, that is keeping multitudes from giving themselves up to Christ. Is this keeping *you* back, reader ?

The Lord now takes another course with the woman. He had tried to reach her heart by a direct appeal to her *understanding*, but without effect. He had pressed on her His loving invitations and explanations, but she could not receive them. He now tries her *conscience*. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." In these few words he touched a chord in the sinner's heart, which vibrated. He laid open before her the little world of iniquity wrapped up within. He revealed to her astonished view what she had so carefully concealed, "he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." He brought the conviction of sin home to her own heart. He brought her to the consciousness of what *she* was, and to the knowledge of what *He* was—"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She had not yet arrived at the full knowledge of who He was, but she had learned something. The light was dawning on her mind. It was the harbinger of the rising Sun of Righteousness, which should soon disperse every cloud from her mind, and enable her to rejoice in the truth He had brought home to her.

And this is the manner in which the Lord often acts in the conversion of the soul. He first sends the message of

the Gospel. He presses its acceptance on the heart. Still no effect is produced. He then brings home to the conscience the conviction of its own sinful state. The soul is roused as out of sleep. The curse of a broken law is seen suspended over it. It is troubled and uneasy. For the first time it feels it has to do with God. It is in His presence. The stagnant waters are stirred up within. Fearfulness and trembling take hold of the conscience. The secret utterance escapes the lips, "O wretched man that I am;" "God be merciful to me a sinner." This is the soul's spiritual history, even before Christ, as its peace, has been fully revealed to it. There is yet to be heard within, "I that speak unto thee am He," leading to perfect rest and happiness, and enabling the soul to exclaim with joyfulness of heart, "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did."

But mark how conscience, appalled by the Almighty's touch, shrinks from view. The woman makes no apology or explanation, in answer to the sin brought to light by the Saviour. She seems to avoid entering on it. How quickly she flies off to another subject, without one allusion to the great secret made known to her by Christ. She merely replies, "Sir, I perceive thou art a prophet," and then, without one remark about the life of sin she was leading, she begins to speak about worship. Conscience was touched. Guilt was brought to light, and, like Adam in the garden, she runs to hide herself behind a religious tree—worship. Is it not often so? Does not the deceitful heart seek to hide itself under a covering of its own, from the stings of a guilty conscience. Does not man hide himself behind some tree, and generally some *religious* one, as this woman did. His own righteousness, or the

mercy of God combined with it—here he secretly takes shelter. He can talk about worship, about the Messiah, about what he shall do when He comes, and so pass for a religious person. So did this woman. So does the guilty conscience of man at all times. Oh! how deceitful is the human heart, and how many are its subterfuges, its refuges of lies. How many are its secret hiding-places. And these in many cases, yea most, are *religious* ones. Man clothes himself with his religious fig-leaf apron, and behind this, he believes he can most effectually screen himself from God's notice. Oh sin! to what wilt thou not drive the human heart! What refuge wilt thou not devise under which the guilty conscience may take shelter! How fatally thou dost deceive the lost one, and drag thy thousands to perdition! And how has the religion of the fallen heart aided thee in thy work of delusion and self-destruction!

Yet the Lord rebukes her not, nor breathes a word of reproach. Gently He follows her in all the windings which her darkened mind and guilty conscience would take. He can use even these to glorify Him. He can make even the wrath of man to praise Him. He can make the religious subterfuges of the fallen heart only bring home more effectually His word to the conscience. What cannot God do! Yes, He can come, as He did of old, behind the tree of the garden, and draw the guilty one to His presence. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews." What a solemn verdict on all worship that has not Christ for its object, and the Holy Spirit for its Author, "ye worship ye know not

what." She was, in her way, a religious woman. She could point to the mountain side on which for years her forefathers had worshipped God. She knew who the Messiah was, and looked forward to His advent. She was, in some measure, acquainted with His character too, as the One who knew all things, and who should be the great Enlightener of the world. She knew much about God, and much that was right. Doubtless so far as she had been instructed, she was a strict observer of her religion, and a sincere worshipper of God, according to the light she possessed. But what of all this if the Holy Spirit were not the Author of it? "Ye worship *ye know not what*," was the sentence passed upon it by the Lord Himself. Ah! it is not enough that the heart be sincere. It is not sufficient that we worship God according to the light of our understanding. It avails nothing that God Himself is the object of it, unless the Holy Spirit be the great mover of all within. With all this, we may hear the voice of God proclaiming in our ears, "*ye worship ye know not what*." Worship has its seat in the heart, and is the approximation of the heart to Christ. It is prayer and praise rising like incense from the heart of the one in whom the Holy Spirit has taken up His dwelling-place. The Spirit prompts the prayer. The Spirit draws forth the ascription of praise, and Christ is the great Object of both. It is not the prayer and praise of *duty*. The soul *cannot help* worshipping. It loves Jesus, and prayer and praise are the grateful offering of a loving heart. There can consequently be no true worship where the heart has not been renewed, and where the love of Christ is not shed abroad in it. It is such a dwelling the Spirit of God makes His temple, and from which grateful incense is ever rising to the throne. The sweet

odours ascend more quickly than the volleyed lightning or the electric spark, and mingle with the intercession of Jesus before the golden altar. There they are purified from every stain of sin, and weakness, and infirmity, and become a sweet savour of Christ unto God. Oh, what a comfort for the weak believer, as he thinks of every act of worship so mingled with sin! How full of human infirmity! How tainted with indwelling corruption! How mingled with thoughts of self! How much of the base alloy, how little of the fine gold! We rise from the mercy-seat, and depart from the sanctuary abashed, and with our faces in the dust, at the retrospective glance we cast at our sacrifices of prayer and praise. Oh, how much there is in them to humble us! Like the leper of old we are ready to cry "unclean, unclean;" "have mercy, Lord, on offerings such as ours!" How precious then, to think of a Saviour's intercession; of an High Priest touched with a feeling of all our infirmities; of the blood on the mercy-seat rendering all our services acceptable to God. This gives confidence at what otherwise *must* overwhelm the saint. This gives him the victory over Satan, when conscience charges, and sins rise mountains high before him. In all he is more than conqueror. In all he has victory, "victory through the blood of the Lamb;" for "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins."

But not only must the Holy Spirit be the Author of worship, not only must it proceed from a renewed heart, constrained by the love of Christ, it must be "*in truth*" also. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in *truth*." This is solemn and instructive. How much is put forward as spiritual worship that is not so.

Who is to determine, when a man declares himself moved by the Spirit of God, whether he be so or not? If there be nothing to decide this, what a door is opened to enthusiasm and fanaticism! What a flood of evil is let loose upon the Church of God! How soon the ravings of a disordered imagination, or the overwrought feelings of the sensitive heart may be put forward as the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God, we are not left in darkness on this all-important point. Worship must not only be in *spirit* but in *truth* also. It must be in accordance with the revealed "*truth*" of God's holy Word; and whatsoever is not in accordance with it, must be rejected as the offspring of the natural heart. The Spirit and the Word ever go hand in hand. They must never be separated. The Word must sit in judgment on what is called spiritual, and the spiritual mind must be corrected by the Word, and draw all its nutriment from it. Reader, never let slip this two-fold chain. Never release your hold of this glorious corrective of all error, this fountain of all truth, the Word of the Living God. "It is written," should be in the heart and on the lips of every Christian. "It is written," should decide every controversy, settle every doubt, and overcome every difficulty. Now that Satan is so busily transforming himself into an angel of light, by putting forward the pious, the sentimental, the warm and devotional, as acceptable to God, because the offering of a sincere heart, we have more need than ever to grasp "the sword of the Spirit" in our hands. "It is written" we reply, in opposition to the specious reasoning, and plausible argument, and false charity, and infidel expediency of the present day. We stand by God's written Word, and by no other will we judge anything in this world. It is the Judge,

not reason. It is the ultimate tribunal, not human expediency. It is the test of truth, and not the false charity of the Romanist, the Rationalist, or the temporizing professor of Christianity, in these slippery days of the world, when men so adroitly suit their principles to the company they are in. "It is written," and we unfurl the glorious standard of our Lord and Master in opposition to all the charges of "Bibliolatry," bigotry, and hate. We can bear them all, for they are the brands of the cross of Christ. But this we say, had God's written Word been the test of truth, instead of the false tests of expediency, charity, and sincerity, which the supine Christianity of modern times has allowed to pass unchallenged; we should by this time have had less Rationalism in our Church, and fewer rents in the body of Christ. Reader, if your feet slip off this Rock, your Christianity, your peace, your joys, your hopes, your *heaven* are dashed to pieces and scattered like chaff before the wind. Church of the living God, sailing through a tempestuous ocean, amid rough seas and stormy skies, and with breakers on every side, let the temporizing expediency, and the false charity, and the infidel tendency of latitudinarian professors shake your grasp of this glorious chart, and nothing can save your barque from a watery grave.

But what is worship? Is it only to be found in the sanctuary, or in the closet? Nay, the heart is God's temple, and the Christian may be a worshipper of God when engaged in the most active walks of life. There is no scene or occupation in which he may not erect God's temple. His duties and his plans, his enjoyments and social delights, may be all laid on the altar of sacrifice. He is not his own, but bought with a price. He is the Lord's steward. "His Lord's money" is in his hands. His body and his spirit are

the Lord's. Whatsoever he does, he has to do it to the Lord, and not unto men. He is to *dwell* in the Lord's house. He is to be a *priest* unto God, and the sacrifices are never to be out of his hands. His entire life, with all its engagements, its cares and events, its joys and sorrows, may all be the offering from the hands of the priest in the temple of the Lord. It is such worshippers that the Father seeketh to worship Him. They worship Him in spirit and in truth. They dwell in God's spiritual temple, even on earth. Everything they take in hand is laid on the altar to Christ. The Shekinah sheds its light on their path, and in its light they walk to Zion.

But what a reproof do the Lord's words contain to this woman's conscience. She had fled behind the tree of "worship" when conscience was touched, but thither infinite mercy followed her. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It contained a rebuke to her secret sin. It was as if the Saviour had said, "You speak about worship, God's worship is spiritual. How can *spiritual* worship proceed from a *sensual* heart? God's worship must be in *truth*. How can worship according to truth proceed from a heart whose indulgences and practices are opposed to truth?" She was living a life of sin, and yet talking about worship! How inconsistent! How fearfully deceived must such an one be! But the heart will hide itself from God, and, because behind a religious tree it can most effectually conceal itself from man, it flies to that refuge in the vain hope of concealing itself from God. Still she alludes not to her sin. She avoids the subject and simply replies, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when He is come He will tell us all things." Jesus an-

swered and said unto her, "I that speak unto thee am He." These words were the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness shining upon the dark world within her. Streak after streak of morn's early dawn had gilded the dark horizon, from the moment the Lord laid His hand on the conscience of the sinner. The divine fiat had gone forth, "let there be light," and there was light. No dazzling splendour burst upon her view unawares, darkening by its brilliance the tender vision, but the mild and softened rays of light, gradually introducing the greater glory, and causing the waking heart to rejoice in its bright and gladdening beams. Gently and tenderly He opened her heart to her view and all that had been so long shut up within it, then created in that heart a desire to know Him, and finally exclaims, "I that speak unto thee am He." Was this the Messiah? Oh how had He appeared to her! She might have had some possible hope that He was coming, but little did she expect to see Him so full of humility, and grace, and love, as to be a suitor for a drink of cold water. No opening heaven revealed Him. No rocking earthquake announced His advent at hand. No opening graves betokened the Almighty Deliverer approaching. No dazzling splendour of the Shekinah blazing overhead, and causing the stricken heart to tremble at its august and awful presence. No; but a weary, jaded traveller with the drops of perspiration streaming from His brow, his robes and sandals betokening a toilsome journey, and a suitor for a drink of cold water from her hands to refresh His exhausted frame! What a way to introduce Himself to her! What depths of humility! What riches of grace! What surprising condescension! What marvellous love! Yet this is the way

in which Christ reveals Himself to any soul, before that soul is drawn to Him. He convinces of sin. He creates the desire to know Him. He reveals Himself, all love and gentleness and grace. The soul is then drawn. It is won by the attractions of His love. He has wounded the soul, but only to heal it. He has killed the love of self and sin within it, but only to make it "alive unto God." And mark the consequence, "the woman then left her water-pot." This is ever the effect the Spirit of God produces in the soul when Christ is revealed there—the entire renunciation of what before the carnal mind was centred in. She came for water. That was all she wanted then. Her mind was on the earthly thing. But soon, she thought not of waterpot, of well, or of water. Something else had pushed them out of view. Something else had risen in higher estimation. The living Water; the heavenly Fountain! These were now the uppermost things. Christ had revealed Himself to her, and with Him in her thoughts and in her heart she turns her back on the well and hastens to the city. An entire revolution had taken place within her. Everything was now in its right place. The heavenly uppermost, the earthly in subjection. Christ first, and everything in relation to Him. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." And out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. She runs off to the city and exclaims, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." The old Gospel invitation is the first utterance of her lips, "Come." She is a vessel filled with the glory of Christ, and she goes forth as a messenger of mercy to declare that glory to others. She invites all to come to the Saviour, "Come and see." It was no hearsay message. She had

seen Christ for herself. She had talked with Him. She had received of His grace and love, and henceforth He was to be her Saviour, and she would be His servant.

What a change ! Could anything but grace have produced it ! Would all the combined forces of outward morality, of human reasoning, of eloquent persuasion, have proved so powerful, so transforming, as the words, "I that speak unto thee am He ?" Could anything but these simple words from the lips of Jesus have sent her into the city with such speed, and with such a message ? Oh, nothing, nothing ! One word from the lips of Jesus, what will it not do ! One hour's communion with God, what a change will it not produce ! A poor, outcast woman goes in her blindness, and guilt, and sin, to a well, and speaks with God, and returns from His presence into the crowded and busy city, and there amidst its turmoil, and tumult, and din, makes her voice tell on numbers around, and draws them after her to the Saviour. Whence such power ? Whence such mighty results ? The presence of God—being *alone with Jesus* !

" Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make ;
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take ;
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower ;
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower ;
We rise, and all—the distant and the near—
Stand forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak ! We rise, how full of power !
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong ;
That we are ever overborne with care,—
That we should ever weak, or heartless be,—
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with Thee ?" †

This, then, is the mighty change which grace produces. And it is a matter entirely between the soul and God. None can come between. None can undertake it for another. And how few may be aware, or able to understand, what is passing between them. God has His own place, and time, and manner of acting with each of those whom He calls to Himself. Grace is bound by no rules, limited to no means, confined to no seasons. God may bring home His truth to the heart in the sanctuary or by the side of a well. He may arrest the sinner on the public road, in the midst of his worldly engagements, or occupied with his household duties. He can make a waterpot or a well speak to the heart as powerfully as an earthquake, a famine, a sermon, or a tract. Let us not marvel at what God can do. Let us not wonder that grace should stoop to the humblest means, or descend to the lowest depths. The disciples marvelled to see the Saviour talking with this woman. They thought, "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," would operate even on the Saviour. Alas! how little even they understood His character. How they measured His grace by their own narrow stinted prejudices! How little they were aware of the great secret that was passing between the sinner and the Saviour! How little they knew the joy of His heart, the delight of His spirit, the meat and drink He had been partaking of, during their absence in the city to buy meat! How little they thought of the great change that had come over her in one hour's interview with their Master at the side of this well! Little does the world know what is passing between the heart and God. Little does it understand its deep joys, its sweet communion, its calm repose, its perfect peace. There are secrets passing between the heart of God's child and Himself that none

may know, not even the nearest and dearest on earth. And well, perhaps it is, that none *do* know. How many might misunderstand, or misinterpret the heart's deep yearnings, the spirit's untold thoughts. How many would impute motives, mis-judge actions, call in question principles, or wound the sensitive spirit. In the often long and toilsome passage of the soul from darkness to light, what tenderness and delicacy, what gentleness and love, what watchfulness and care are needed, lest the bruised reed should be broken, and the smoking flax be quenched. Oh! none but Christ can deal with the soul. None but He is so qualified. None but He can understand it. None but He can finish the work that His own grace has begun. Blessed it is that we have to do *only with Him*. He can enter into our thoughts. He can understand our meaning. He can see the sincere motive, and the holy intention. He can enter into the *peculiar* sorrow. He can understand the *special* want. He can appreciate the lowly but unsuccessful effort. He will not smile at His child's weakness, nor think lightly of his feeble service, though it be mingled with infirmity, and weakness and sin. He will not weary of the heart's oft-told tale, nor be impatient with His erring, wandering child. Blessed be His Holy Name for ever and ever! There is none like Him for the sinner's soul. None like Jesus! "Lord, to whom shall we go" but to Thee? To whom shall the helpless and outcast repair for refuge, but to Thee! To whom shall the weary and heavy laden betake themselves to unburden their sorrows and their griefs but to Thee! Who can understand them as Thou canst! Who can meet them as Thou dost!

Is there one reading these pages whose conscience

accuses him of a past life of forgetfulness of God, of having set His laws at defiance, abused His blessings and gifts, despised His warnings and counsels, grieved the Holy Spirit, crucified to himself afresh the Son of God and put Him to an open shame? Backslider, wanderer from God, whose sins rise like mountains before thee, shutting out all hope and mercy, behold the Saviour at this well. See Him travelling forty miles under the heat of a burning sun to convince, pardon, and bless this sinner. He who entered Samaria's outcast city, will enter thy guilty heart. He who pardoned her will pardon thee. He who filled her soul with living water, will fill thine also. A Saviour's voice can still reach you. A Saviour's blood can still wash away your sins. Listen to the glad sound of welcome from one who proved it. Come, backslider, and see this Man Christ Jesus. Come and talk with Him as she did. Come and open thy heart to Him. Come and see how gracious Christ is. Come and taste of pardoning mercy, of joy unspeakable, of love passing knowledge. Come and drink of this living water.

Is there one whose past history is defaced with deep, dark blots of sin, involving, perhaps, the ruin of his fellowman's happiness, with crimes of deepest dye, transgressions and iniquities too gross to be mentioned, too foul for inspection, making conscience tremble, and the countenance blush; such crimes as none but Satan could suggest, and none but a Satanic spirit could accomplish? Turn, guilty one, to this well of Sychar. Say not, "there is no hope for me." Despair not, though thy past life may be scarlet, and crimson-dyed with sin. There is hope for thee—even for thee. He who met this guilty profligate and dragged to light her life of secret infamy, not to upbraid or condemn, but to

have mercy and to save, will have mercy on thee. Oh, come and see this Man Christ Jesus! Come and bathe His feet with thy tears. Come, and alone with Him, smite upon thy breast and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He will heal thy backsliding. He will love thee freely. Oh! come and see; "taste and see that the Lord is gracious!"

And make haste, for time's sun is fast setting. See that God's offers of mercy be not spurned. Up! and rouse you from your sleep of carnal indifference, ere it be too late! The Saviour still lingers in mercy in the midst of this Samaritan world. Soon He may quit our shores for ever. Soon the glad sound of redeeming love may cease to be heard in your ears. A few more breathings of this world's atmosphere and your sun may set in darkness for ever. Oh! go not down to the grave with your work undone, and your soul unsaved. Fly to His arms of mercy still outstretched to enfold you. Your past life has gone with all its sins to the bar of God—you cannot recall it. Your present may be hung with the drapery of sorrow, and tears, and bitter reproaches. But the future—that is yours, by the help and blessing of God, Up, and seize its fleeting moments! The dark cloud may yet have its sunset of gold. The summer that is ended may yet have its redeeming tints of autumnal beauty, ere the long winter night of death has set in. Awake then, and redeem the time. Go, wash in a Saviour's blood. Go, lay hold of the horns of the altar. Fly quickly to the city of refuge. "Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith

unto the churches." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

SWEET was the hour, O Lord, to Thee,
At Sychar's lonely well,
When a poor outcast heard Thee there,
Thy great salvation tell.

Thither she came ; but Oh ! her heart,
All fill'd with earthly care,
Dream'd not of Thee, nor thought to find
The Hope of Israel there.

Lord ! 'twas Thy power unseen that drew
The stray one to that place,
In solitude to learn from Thee,
The secrets of Thy grace.

There Jacob's erring daughter found
Those streams unknown before,
The waterbrooks of life, that make
The weary thirst no more.

And, Lord, to us, as vile as she,
Thy gracious lips have told
That mystery of love, reveal'd
At Jacob's well of old.

In spirit, Lord, we've sat with Thee,
Beside the springing well
Of life and peace—and heard Thee there
Its healing virtues tell.

Dead to the world, we dream no more
Of sinful pleasures now ;
Our deep, divine, unfailing spring
Of grace and glory, Thou !

No hope of rest in aught beside,
No beauty, Lord, we see,
And like Samaria's daughter seek,
And find our all in Thee.

J A I R U S' D A U G H T E R.

MARK V. 22—24 and 35—42.

THERE is one feature in which the Jewish dispensation differed materially from the present one; earthly prosperity was the sign of God's special favour. The seal of divine approval was manifested in the temporal blessings which, as a rule, encircled the path of the obedient follower of God. Now, however, it is rather the reverse of this. Although God blesses His obedient children, worldly prosperity is not the sign of it. The evidence of God's favour to His earthly people were earthly blessings; the evidence of His favour to His spiritual people are spiritual blessings. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." The Apostle Peter anticipates this. "Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some *strange* thing happened unto you." Be not surprised. Think it not strange. It will be so. To the Lord's people, trial is the mark of sonship, "for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not." Suffering is the evidence of God's love to you. It is the family badge, the family likeness. All God's people have it in some measure. Have you faith? Be not surprised if it is tried in the fire. Have you love to Christ, devotedness to His cause, a single eye to His glory? Be not surprised,

if, at every step, your principles are subjected to the crucible. It is not the base metal that is cast into the furnace; it is the precious gold and silver, and you are in God's sight as such. The Saviour Himself beautifully confirms this. He says "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He *purgeth* it that it may bring forth more fruit." It is not the withered branch that is purged, but the living and fruitful one. If then you are God's child, and are in sorrow and trial, you are the living branch that He is purging. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." The branches that are pruned and purged are the healthiest, the most fruitful, and reflect most credit on the Husbandman.

This trial of faith is strikingly manifested in the portion of Scripture we have selected for consideration. A father's dear and only child, the joy of his heart, the solace of his life, and around whom all the fondest affections of nature clustered—perhaps too strongly—is laid on a bed of death. The young sapling seems marked to fall beneath the axe of the rude destroyer. Though scarcely twelve years old, the seal of death is graven on the fair lineaments of that tender blossom. The hushed footfall, the suppressed whisper, the darkened windows, all too plainly reveal that the shadows of death are falling around that chamber. What can be done to arrest the destroyer's arm and turn aside the uplifted dart? A father's heart is smarting under the stroke that threatens to extinguish all his earthly hopes, and a mother's tears reveal too painfully the depth of that affection that knows no equal, but in a mother's heart; and which is drawn out when its dearest tie is about to be snapped asunder. But what can be done in the trying moment? What can maternal affection devise, or human sympathy suggest? Where shall the living—often

the greatest sufferers at such a moment—look for hope or hasten for relief? Quick must be the decision, and with alacrity carried out, for the sands of life's hour-glass are rapidly ebbing. One thought flashes across the father's mind. A ray of hope darts through that desponding and disconsolate heart. "Cannot the prophet of Nazareth who lately restored health to the faithful slave of a Capernaum officer and raised the widow's son at Nain, help me in this trying hour? Will not He who came to that helpless one in his death-throes, and who pitied the desolate heart of the widow, come to my dwelling and have mercy on me. Speak the word that shall arrest the fatal malady and restore my dying one to health and strength? Slumbereth there not Omnipotence beneath His arm? Dwelleth there not mercy and compassion in His heart?"

With such thoughts in his mind the Ruler of the synagogue hastens to the presence of Jesus, and casts himself at His feet. With intense earnestness he implores Him on behalf of his suffering child. Conscious that he was now at the feet of the only Being in all Capernaum that could help him, he pleaded with an importunity and an earnestness he had never felt before. Prostrate in the dust, he seems to say, "here is my only hope. If I am repulsed, I must only turn away in despair. Lord of the helpless and afflicted, look upon me."

His prayer was heard. He rises from the dust, and in company with the Saviour, bends his steps towards his sorrow-stricken home. Before we pass on with them, let us learn some lessons from this part of the narrative.

Jairus' trial was a deep one. It penetrated his inmost heart with all the poignancy of a thorn in the flesh, making it bleed with sorrow. It was the prospect of losing

a dearly-beloved and only daughter. Such was the affliction that led him to the feet of Jesus, and made him so earnest in prayer. Had it been otherwise perhaps he would never have gone, and would thus have missed all that gracious discipline, and those insights into the Lord's precious character, which must have left a deep impression on his heart for the remainder of his life. Trial made him earnest in prayer. Trial brought him to Christ and brought Christ to his dwelling. Trial brought him into an acquaintance with the Saviour that he never had before. Trial made Christ precious—yea the best and dearest of all friends to him. It formed and cemented a bond between him and the Saviour that nothing could break, and which would be co-eval with life itself. Precious are these strokes from our heavenly Father's hand! But for them, how little should we know ourselves or God. How long should we remain at a guilty distance from Him. It is love that sees us often attracted unconsciously by other objects than the Saviour, some forbidden treasure filling up the niche in the heart's affections causing it to gravitate too much towards the creature instead of the Creator, and that sends the unwelcome messenger to draw us back. No earnest pleading with God because the world has got into the soul and damped its heavenly fervour. Faith begins to wane and the heart becomes divided. The world's chilling, poisonous atmosphere, hangs about the skirts of the new man, and robs him of his strength. The taint becomes manifest to the world's keen eye, ever on the alert to mark the inconsistencies of the Christian professor. There is a breach within between the soul and God. There is a moral palsy over the spiritual appetite. There is no sanctifying influence exerted without. Thus

many are, and remain till God rouses them up from their lethargy with the rod of affliction. The arrow penetrates the heart. It bleeds at every pore. Every fibre of the frame quivers under the Almighty's touch. Then we start up as one awakened out of sleep. The spell is broken. We begin to look around us for help. Alas! the world has none; it never had for a bleeding heart. Driven like a bird robbed of her nest from twig to twig, and from spray to spray, we find no relief. Oh, how empty do all human cisterns look then! What delusive opiates are all that the world can offer then! What wretchedness within! What hollowness without! Wherever we propose to nestle, there our heavenly Father seems to have planted a thorn before us. Hungry and thirsty, our souls fainting within us, we have fallen at the feet of Jesus. Then we have cried as we never did before, "Lord, undertake for me. My heart is overwhelmed within me; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Oh! how real has prayer become. How earnest! How has all the formal and superficial about us vanished! All has become a solemn reality! And though the heart may be writhing under the hammer of the Almighty, yet is He doing His work, purging the branch from its wanton foliage, that it may bring forth fruit in due season to His glory. Alas! that we should need such trying discipline. But we do, and but for it many a gem in the Saviour's crown would remain tarnished and sightless. The world's opiates may do for a bright and cloudless day. When the sun is smiling over our heads, and fortune is weaving her golden threads in our path; when our bark of existence holds its way through unruffled seas and cloudless skies; and no chilling winds of adversity nip the promising blossoms that cluster so thickly around us—

then the world may fascinate our earthly hearts with its treacherous glow, its gilded visions, its meteor lights, its broken cisterns, its unsatisfying streams, its wells without water. But when our horizon is robed in sackcloth, when every star in the firmament is quenched in midnight, when "the dead march" is heard in place of life's joyous music, and every prop on which we leaned has pierced the heart and made it bleed—what then? Oh! how passing strange that we should be so long mocked by an empty, dying world! Blessed thought! we are not left alone to run unchecked in our downward course. One there is above, who bends over the thoughtless wanderer with a pitying eye. One who loves him, and throws around a fence to keep him from the gaping chasm towards which he is heedlessly rushing. One who hedges up his way that he cannot pass; who strips his crown and his glory from his head; who breaks every cistern, poisons every stream, blights every flower, drapes every landscape, robes his horizon in midnight darkness, and never lets him alone till the wanderer has come back to the fold, a wiser, a holier, a happier child. Blessed be His Holy Name for every stroke that makes us more watchful, more prayerful, more holy, and that makes Jesus more than ever precious to the soul.

But we pass on to the case of Jairus. He came to Jesus and said, "I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her and *she shall live*." Here was simple, trusting faith. He appears not to have had a doubt, either as to the power or the willingness of the Saviour. He came and "besought him greatly." It was an appeal that found its way to the heart of the Saviour. Such faith always does. It may be, it will be tried; but it lays hold of the hand of the Almighty and takes Him along with it into the trial.

We shall see what deep waters his faith had to pass through on the journey, but here was the pledge, that however tried, it could not fail,—the Lord was with him to the end; at his side to subdue each rising unbelief, to sustain the faith he had kindled in the soul, and to give him the reward of it when the journey was over.

What an antidote to sorrow and trial is the presence of Jesus! This is the believer's comfort all through his journey here. It is the pillow on which he reclines when driven to and fro by the storms of unbelief and trial and persecution. It is the bosom on which the suffering Church of God has reposed in all ages. Her path to glory has ever been a rugged and thorny one. She has had to fight her way to the throne through the martyr's tribulations, a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. She has had to grasp her crown amid foes of every name and shape, and to hold it amid seas of blood. But what to her were ignominy and suffering? What to her the malice and fury of persecutors hemming her in on every side and confronting her at every step? What to her was the torture or the rack that tore the limb and lacerated the nerve? What to her was the long imprisonment that wore away the buoyancy of the spirit, or the death of long and lingering agony which wrenched the soul from its tenement of clay? She shrank not, she trembled not, she fled not back, for Christ was in the midst of her. The presence of Jesus was her staff and stay, her song of victory when all things were against her. With Him at hand she pressed onward through peril and through blood, and fought her way to the sapphire throne. In all things she was more than conqueror, through the presence of Him who loved her, for whom she had suffered the loss of all things,

and did count them but dung that she might win Christ.

Reader, is that same Saviour yours? Has the sea of afflictions through which you have waded, the sorrows and trials that have swept through your heart led you to the feet of Jesus. Have they brought you into a deeper acquaintance with Him. Have they formed a living bond between you and the Saviour, or drawn more firmly His bands of love round your soul? Is this your experience, or, alas! is it otherwise? Have the messengers of mercy left you as they found you, still clinging to a dying world, and rushing to its polluted streams to fill the gaping crevices in your heart? God has spoken to you *once* by some solemn warning, by some worldly loss, by some wasting sickness, by some opened grave. Oh! have you listened to His voice? Have you profited by the warning? Remember, reader, the awful words of the Holy Ghost written for your admonition, "he that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall *suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*"

On the way to the Ruler's house the Saviour's progress was delayed by an incident narrated in this chapter. A poor woman having an issue of blood, worked her way through the crowd that followed Him, and touched the hem of His garment. Immediately her terrible disease was healed. The Lord stayed for some time to speak to her, to calm her trembling fears and anxieties. Just at the very time when speed was indispensable, and when every moment was of infinite importance, He delays. What a trial to Jairus! Scarcely has He ceased speaking to her, when the Ruler is stunned by the sad and bitter intelligence that his daughter is dead! How strangely mysterious are God's dealings with His people. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick and at the point of death, "He abode two

days still in the same place where He was!" When a loved and only daughter lay on the bed of death, and every moment was of the utmost importance, He tarried on the roadside to speak with a woman! Who can wonder at nature's utterance under the prostrating blow; "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Who could wonder if the pent-up feelings of the father's heart had burst forth in an agonizing cry, "Lord, if Thou hadst not tarried, my daughter's life might have been spared. If Thou hadst left this woman's case to another day, and hastened to my roof, this bitter trial might have been spared me." Yes, such are often the Lord's dealings; a baffling enigma, a clouded mystery. The wicked flourishing as a green bay tree, while the servant of the Lord lies on a bed of suffering, in some garret or hovel. The Christ-loving and loved battling with a sea of trials and afflictions, often overwhelmed in trouble, in breathless suspense and agitation at some unforeseen reverse, and not knowing what may be on the morrow; while the ungodly, the covetous, the sensual, the profligate, sail along life's smooth sea with nothing to disturb them in their course. Some families of God, beholding with tearful eye and broken heart, tree after tree succumbing to the blast, or the tender saplings one after another cut down; while one who cares not for God, and who tramples His laws in the dust, has all his plants growing up around his fireside in health and strength, and surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of life.

And the experience of God's people is still the same to this very day. "Why this cutting sorrow? Why these waves of trial rolling one after another over my soul? Why these blanks in my once happy home—these vacant

chairs and this desolation around me, that makes my heart bleed! Why this blight on my fairest prospects, this blast on my beautiful gourd, this withering up of the only joy and comfort left in my desolate heart?"

Hush the rebellious whisper! "Whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth." If He permit the billows of affliction to be let loose, it is only that you may be driven nearer to His side. If the hurricane is allowed to descend upon the forest, it is only that the trees of His planting may fix their roots more firmly in the Rock of Ages.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace."

Not one unneeded sorrow will He send. Not one unappointed wave shall break over your vessel. Not one storm cloud drape your horizon, that has not the rays of the sun behind it. Trust the Lord in the dark. The world can trust Him when it is light, but it is your high privilege to follow Him where you cannot trace Him. Your earthly streams may be all dry, your gourds may be all withered, and you may seem to stand alone in a waste and howling wilderness. But trust Him. "The Lord is good to them that wait for Him;" and they that wait on Him shall never be ashamed. In His own good time you shall yet praise Him. You shall yet see the rays of infinite love darting through every dark cloud above you, and shining upon your soul with gladdening lustre. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God." Remember His love in time past. Look back on your earthly path, and remember the dark spots, now all clear and bright. Has *He* ever failed you? Has *one* promise of His ever been unfulfilled? You have said, perhaps often, with one of old, who passed through many and deep waters, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life." Or, perhaps, with another of God's tried and deeply-afflicted ones,

"Oft I walk beneath a cloud,
Dark as midnight's gloomy shroud;
But when fear is at its height,
Jesus comes and all is light.

Blessed Jesus! bid me shew
Doubting saints, how much I owe."

Oh, then, trust your tried and precious Saviour still, and all will be well! There is love in every trial, however deep. There is a wise purpose beneath it all, depend upon it. The Lord has tarrying love as well as hasting love. So it was with Jairus here. This miracle on the poor woman would strengthen his confidence in Christ's power and ability. Perhaps *this was just what he needed at this very moment*. Perhaps, like many of the Lord's weak ones, he required some special encouragement in order to keep up his faith. We may be sure there was a "needs" for it. We may be sure there was something the Lord saw, though Jairus might not have seen it. Then how would this manifestation of the Lord's grace and love prepare him for the greater trial, the death of his daughter. While the worldly ones filled the death-chamber, crying in hopeless sorrow, and making such noises, what kept *him* calm? The knowledge of what Christ had been to this needy and helpless woman. He had been learning something of *Jesus* by the way, and the deeper insight we get into His heart, the better are we prepared to meet trial of any kind. The knowledge of Jesus is the only true panacea for sorrow, the only efficacious antidote to affliction. And does not the Lord deal with most of His children in the same way as He did with Jairus? He gives

them some special manifestations of His grace and love, before the hour of trial comes, so that when it does come, they may not sink under it. If they have to speak of desolating sorrow, they can also speak of unchanging goodness and mercy. They have *songs* in the *night*. Their experience is ever that of the Psalmist, "I will sing of *mercy* and *judgment*."

We can see now a gracious reason why the Lord tarried on the way to the Ruler's house. And the Saviour at whose feet he had fallen, and who had strengthened his faith by this miracle of mercy, was *present* with him, and would continue to be present to the end of his journey. What if the brightest star in his firmament were eclipsed. What if the loveliest flower in his garden had been rudely plucked by the hand of death; still God was with him, and would be with him to the end. Here was the mourner's solace! Here was the silver lining fringing the dark cloud. The next moment might be the bearer of some disastrous intelligence. So it was: "thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master." But what of it, the Conqueror of death was at his side! What of it, "the Resurrection and the Life" was with him! The thunder cloud might be overhead, "the great and strong wind, the earthquake, the fire," but along with them came "the still small voice"—"be not afraid; only believe." Yes, God never sends the trial without the comfort. God never permits the crushing intelligence to arrive, "thy daughter is dead," but He whispers, "be not afraid." Trust me. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." Satan let loose upon the faith of the Ruler all his weapons. "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." "It is all over with you now. Your coming to Christ was of no

use. Your trust in Him has failed. He can do nothing for you. Leave Him, and come away to your house." Such was the import of the message. Ah! well for him was it that He had been a witness to the Saviour's love and power. Well for him, that he had a *tried* Saviour at his side. Well for him, that like the disciples of old, when the storm burst forth in all its fury, there was one in the midst of it to whisper, "It is I, be not afraid." Oh! to be in the hurricane, and hear no Saviour's voice, is terrible. Sad it is, to have no hope in Him wherewith to ride out the storm. Sad it is, to breast the billows of bereavement, of crushing sorrow, or of fiery temptation; and have to grope after a Saviour unknown, and till then unsought. You may do well enough without Him when all is bright, and when prosperity sheds its fascinating gleams around you; but there is a day coming—it may come *soon*—when your home, like that of Jairus, will be clouded with deepening death-shadows; and what will the end be, if you have to seek a Saviour *then*? What an hour will that be, if you have to send forth agonized pleadings to an *unknown* Saviour? The mists of death gathering thickly around you, and with no beacon light to irradiate its gloom; no softening ray to calm your panting spirit! Oh! reader, be it yours to seek a Saviour while life lasts. Open the doors of your heart to His messages of mercy and grace, while the sun shines on your path, and no cloud hangs over your threshold. Seek the Lord in life and health and prosperity; and leave the night of adversity and sickness and death to Him. He will take care of these. Take care of your *life*. He will take care of your *death*. Depend upon it, all will be well with you if you only do this.

In this narrative we may learn another lesson of the love of Christ to His tried and suffering people. When Satan appeared, and said, "trouble not the Master," the Ruler had not to encounter the foe. The Lord stood between them. Scarcely had the words been spoken, before the voice of the Lord was heard: "be not afraid; only believe." Like as it was with Joshua, the High Priest; Satan stood at his right hand to resist, but the Lord was there to rebuke him. Thus is it ever with God's people. In all the assaults of the enemy, Jesus stands between them. All his attacks fall on Christ before they touch the believer. "He that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of the Lord's eye." Jairus answered not the messengers, but Jesus did. The Lord had taken upon Himself the responsibility of raising his daughter to life. His own Name's sake, His own glory was now at stake, in all that concerned the Ruler. Oh that we had faith at all times to see this! To know and feel that in all our trials and perplexities, in all that clouds and depresses or eclipses the sunshine of faith in our souls, the honour and glory of Christ is concerned; that our God and Saviour has not only taken upon Himself the responsibility of our *salvation*, but of all our *circumstances*; that not only is the soul safe by being united to Christ, but also, that not a hair of the head can be touched without our heavenly Father's will. What a comfort is the assurance of such a truth in the midst of life's trials and duties! What calmness it sheds on the believer's oftentimes anxious and troubled heart! "My Saviour's honour is concerned in the trying position, into which I am so unexpectedly plunged. My Saviour's own word is pledged on my behalf in this peculiar and pressing necessity. My Saviour's glory is concerned, whatever may hap-

pen to me in the dark future, from which I shrink, and the prospect of which makes heart and flesh fail me. He knows all. He enters into all. His glory is concerned in the least as well as the greatest of all my circumstances. The responsibility is His, not mine—His who loves me with an everlasting love, and who has promised that He will be with me to the end." Precious truth ! What stability and strength it gives to the mind and heart ! What power for diligent service in the vineyard of the Master ! Then we are enabled to say,

" Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me ;
And the changes that must surely come
I do not fear to see ;
But I ask Thee for a subject mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

There are briars besetting every path,
Which call for patient care ;
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need of prayer ;
*But the lowly heart that leans on Thee,
Is happy everywhere."*

But what had Jairus to depend upon ? Only the *word* of Jesus ; " be not afraid, only believe." Nothing else supported him under the heart-crushing intelligence that arrived. Nothing else but this sustained him to the end. On that he relied, and on that only. This is the rock that faith ever rests on. This is the rock on which the Church in all ages has rested. Abraham left his country, his kindred, his father's house, and became a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth. What led him to

this step? What sustained him in this course? Simply and solely the promise of God. And he went down to the grave depending upon that unfulfilled promise. So is it with the children of God at all times. The word of promise is all they have to depend upon, and on that word they calmly and joyfully lie down to die. The word of Jesus is everything to them. So it was to Jairus here. And as surely as his dependance on that word met with its reward, so surely will the dependance of each one of God's people on His word meet with its full reward also. "Blessed are all they that *wait* for Him."

So the Saviour and the Ruler reach the house. And what is seen there? Everything calculated to rouse the dormant unbelief in his heart. All the sad tidings of the messengers confirmed. Here was a further trial of faith. A faint gleam of hope might have lingered in his mind, that there was, after all, some mistake in the report of the messengers. But now, alas! every glimmer vanishes. There are the mourners for the dead assembled, and on every side he hears the sounds of weeping and wailing. Jesus had said, "be not afraid; only believe!" "Surely He must have been mocking me; buoying up my crushed heart with hope; allowing the golden opportunity to pass, by tarrying on the way, and now all is over. What can He have meant?" And we can picture his expressive look of anguish, saying but too plainly, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my daughter had not died."

Still not a word escapes his lips. He stands still, waiting on Jesus. Now has come the extremity. Faith has been tried in the furnace, and it is now to come forth like gold. What a peculiarly trying, but

truly blessed attitude, is that in which we now see Jairus—his daughter lying dead at his side, and he *silent*! Ah! this is the faith that glorifies God. There is more majesty and grandeur here than in half the heroism of the world. It is easy to be silent and wait upon God when all is well with us. It is easy to trust the Lord, when like Israel, He goes before us in the pillar of cloud and fire, and makes a path for us through the mighty waters. It is easy to stand still and trust by the side of gushing fountains and shady palm trees, or with heaven's plenty lying on every side of us. But when the pillar-cloud has ceased to be visible, and all outward refuges are withdrawn; when the host of the mighty ones are pressing behind, and the waves of the great sea are rolling at our feet, then how hard it is to "stand still and see the salvation of God." But then is the time for faith to rise triumphant. Then is the hour when God is most glorified in us. This is faith's mightiest conquest, in comparison with which all earth's achievements are as nothing. And what a picture of it we have before us! Here is a tried and afflicted child of God, the subject of God's mysterious dealings; all the pillars of hope in his heart's shrine have crumbled one after another to decay; and now he stands at the bed-side of his beloved and only daughter, locked in the arms of death. Yet not a murmur escapes his lips! Not a rebellious whisper is heard! There he stands, still waiting on Jesus. It is recorded of Aaron that when his two sons lay dead at his side, "he held his peace." What a conquest of grace over nature! So was it with the Ruler. Grief there might have been, but not the hopeless sorrow of one who had never known Christ. Tears there may have been, the heart-crushing weight of sorrow

pressing him down beneath its heavy load; but all brought under the power of that faith which keeps the soul waiting upon God, that faith that raises the tearful eye to heaven and exclaims, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good unto Him," that faith that can say with the poet,

"My times are in Thy hand,
My God, I leave them there;
My life, my friends, my all, I leave
Entirely to Thy care.

My times are in Thy hand,
Whatever they may be;
Painful or pleasing, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.

My times are in Thy hand,
Why should I doubt or fear;
A Father's hand will never cause
His child a needless tear."

"Fear not." "They that wait on the Lord shall never be ashamed." "They shall yet praise Him, who is the health of their countenance, and their God." These waiting seasons, trying though they are to flesh and blood, are nevertheless precious ones for the soul. Oh, how much do we learn in them that will pass on with us into eternity, and draw from our lips there the loudest praises! Yes, it will be then seen, that our waiting time here, has been the most precious part of our heavenward journey. How will the joy of that world of unbroken rest be enhanced by the trials and struggles of life's pilgrimage, where not one wave of sorrow shall ever break over the soul. Each shall look back and exclaim, "He hath done all

things well." The burst of holy song shall then be heard from the waiting ones that have passed through the valley of Baca, "Father, we bless Thee for each sorrow, we thank Thee for every bitter cup Thou hast put into our hands, we praise Thee for the storms and tempests of life's troubled sea! Every storm has ceased, every wave has rocked itself to rest, every barque has reached the quiet haven. Our light affliction was but for a moment, and has worked out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

This was just the moment when the faith of Jairus again needed the word of Jesus. In the scene that was going on in that house, Satan presented a sight calculated to cast every gleam of hope to the winds. It was a true picture of this world; the wailings of death heard on all sides, without the only thing that can take away its sting—a saving knowledge of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. The drooping faith of the Ruler is again restored by the Lord's voice, exclaiming, "Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." Thus is it always. "The Lord will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will, *with the temptation*, make a way to escape." Faith is the fine gold which the Refiner casts into the furnace, but from which His eye is never removed for a moment. Only then, when it reflects the Refiner's image is it purified from its dross, and drawn forth from the fire. That moment had now arrived to the Ruler of the synagogue.

"The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." Strange but comforting words to all who "sorrow not as others that have no hope!" "Thy daughter is dead" was the world's utterance. Nay, says the Saviour, "she sleepeth;" and

under the sweet emblem of repose, faith rears its head and rejoices in hope. "She sleepeth," are the sounds which fall on the astonished ears of the unbelieving, mocking crowd. Yet there lay the tender blossom cut down and withered, and the trappings and memorials of death strewed about the gloomy chamber. Ah! none could see as Christ saw. Jairus looked, and thought she was dead. All the bystanders looked, and thought she was dead. So it appeared. All seemed to be over, and hope to have fled for ever. Oh, is it not often thus that our faith is brought to that crisis when all seems at an end, and death appears to have set its seal on hoping, trusting, waiting! "What then can the Lord mean? Is He mocking?" Check the atheistic thought! God sees not as man sees. God judges not as man judges. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. You see only *death* in that body, God sees *life* there. In that dead body all hope seems to you to have fled. God sees in it the answer to your earnest prayers and waiting faith. Let the unbelieving look and laugh the Saviour to scorn; let them mock the Christian's humble trust; only "stand still" and you shall see. God can turn into dry land that deep sea that lies at your feet. God can make that flinty rock send forth rivers of living water. God can make a withered rod strike terror into a nation, and humble the proud autocrat of Egypt. Peace, trembling disciples, braving the midnight billows of Tiberias! that spectral figure that rides upon the wave is not the foe from the spirit world sent to swallow you up! It is Jesus, your Friend and Brother, your Lord and Saviour. Peace, Jairus, in that dead body that seems to be the end of all hope, and the beginning of all despair, God sees the answer to thy earnest prayers, and thy heart's deep longings. Peace, tried and

tempted believer, that rough billow that threatens to extinguish the last flickering gleam of hope in thy heart, shall lift it in praises to the skies. Jesus rides upon the storm. Jesus holds the helm and guides the ship.

“Led by that, still brave the ocean,
Led by that, the storms defy;
Calm, amidst tumultuous motion,
Knowing that the Lord is nigh:
Waves obey Him,
And the storms before Him fly.”

Though there be tumult in thy heart, though there be tumult in thy house, though all hope seems to have gone, and thou art lying prostrate under the hammer of the Lord—stay thyself on God! “Be not afraid; only believe.” “Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” That river is Jesus. Those streams are streams of love. He that drinketh of that river shall never thirst. “They that wait upon the Lord shall never be ashamed.” “When the poor and needy seek water and *there is none*, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water; that they may see and know and consider and understand together that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”

One point more. We read, “He put them all out, save the father and mother of the damsel, and the disciples that

were with Him. And He took the damsel by the hand and said unto her, 'Talitha cumi,' which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked." "He put them all out." Why was this? They had sought the Lord, and waited for Him, and they alone should now see His glory. The Saviour was about to shew forth that glory in restoring the daughter to life. The unbelieving ones had mocked the Saviour, and now they should not see His glory; they were shut out. Solemn warning! It is a picture of what shall be shortly, when the door which shuts all God's seeking and trusting ones in, shall shut all unbelieving ones out. In that chamber there were none present but the family of God. To them He manifested His glory. It is a type of what shall be, when God's people are gathered out of every kingdom and people and nation and tongue; when the prayer of the Saviour shall be answered, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me." Then shall seeking, trusting, and waiting, be over. Prayer shall issue in everlasting praise, and faith in glad fruition. Till then, however, the Ruler's path must be ours; the path of seeking and trusting, the path of confidence and faith. If such it be, and with Jesus as our abiding Companion and Guide, our *end* shall be like his too. Our souls shall be satisfied with His fulness; we shall look back and praise Him for every trial, and cast every crown at His feet.

Reader, may this path be yours, and yours will then be the end. Let not sorrow or trial overtake you with a Saviour, till then, unknown and unsought. Let it not be

yours, to have to seek Him when the shadows of death are falling thickly around you. A death-bed will afford no peace to the soul, that till then, has deferred the momentous question of its eternal salvation. Seek the Saviour in health. Walk with God through life. And then a dying pillow will be peaceful and happy, and joy will be your everlasting portion.

“Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathom'd no man knows!
I see from far thy beauteous light,
Inly I sigh for thy repose :
My heart is pain'd, nor can it be
At rest, till it find rest in thee !

'Tis mercy all, that Thou hast brought
My mind to seek its peace in Thee ;
Yet while I seek, but find Thee not,
No peace my wand'ring soul shall see ;
Oh, when shall all my wand'rings end,
And all my steps to Jesus tend !

Is there a thing beneath the sun,
That strives with Thee my heart to share ?
Ah ! tear it thence, and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there !
Then shall my heart from earth be free,
When it hath found repose in Thee.

Each moment draw from earth away
My heart, that lowly waits Thy call ;
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
'I am thy Life, thy God, thy All !'
To feel Thy pow'r, to hear Thy voice,
To taste Thy love, be all my choice ! ”

THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

MARK iv. 1—9.

WE are entering on the consideration of a most important portion of God's Holy Word. It is one in which opposite principles are strikingly developed. It presents us with a picture, in which the Heavenly Artist has brought to view all the features, with an exactness and a finish unparalleled. God and man stand prominently forward in the scene, and the contrasting colours in which each is represented leave an indelible impression on the mind. It is a sketch so accurately and faithfully drawn, that none but a Divine Artist could have taken it. May we gaze upon it without curiosity. May mind and heart be absorbed in its subject, and may it make a heavenly impression on the memory that may be as seed sown in good ground.

The outer kingdom of nature is God's picture-gallery of the hidden kingdom of grace. The pictures hung on its walls are transferred by the Saviour to the heavenly temple. Nothing in the outer court is deemed too trifling or insignificant for the most holy place. A door, a vine-tree, a sheep-fold, a water-pot, the leaven hid in the meal, the seed in the hand of the sower,—all are hallowed, by contact with a living Saviour, and made heavenly pictures of what "eye hath not seen, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive."

The last of these is what we are now called upon to contemplate—the seed in the hand of a sower. We are told in the opening of the parable, that the Saviour “began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine, ‘Hearken! behold there went out a sower to sow.’” The Lord, in all probability, had at that moment before Him each of the four great classes of hearers in His mind. The promiscuous crowd at the sea-side presented a type of the world, in which those classes are found. The whole of mankind may be comprised under them, and He seems to say to them, and through them to us, “Hearken! I have something of great importance to tell you; something that concerns each one; something on which your eternal destiny is suspended, and worthy of your deepest attention. Hearken! Behold, there went out a sower to sow.”

The three prominent features of the parable are the sower, the seed, and the ground. The first of these—the sower—is doubtless the Lord Jesus Christ. He first began this great work of sowing the seed of eternal life. After He had ascended to heaven, the work was committed to the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven to take His place. The Spirit of God is now the great Sower of the heavenly seed. The instrumentalities He makes use of for this purpose, are many and various. Just as the Son transfers from the picture-gallery of nature to the kingdom of grace, the most ordinary objects, as representations of Himself and His grace, so does the Spirit make use of the same in sowing the seed of heaven. **Minis-**

ters, evangelists, missionaries; books, sermons, tracts; the humblest and the weakest of every shade are enlisted in His service, and sent forth with their messages of salvation to a dying world. The seed is sown broadcast. There is no limitation. There is no distinction. It is sown on the hard and rocky heart as well as on the good ground, in order that all may be without excuse. None can say, he is less privileged than another. None can say, "God has passed me by." None can exclaim, "I am too far gone in sin." Way-side, stony ground, thorny ground, and good ground; all alike are the gracious subjects of its blessings. The murderer in his cell, the saint in his closet, the Pharisee in his self-righteousness, the publican in his conscious guilt, the hoary-headed sire whose locks are white with age, and the young man rejoicing in his strength, the nobleman in his palace, and the beggar in his hovel, the naked savage prostrate beneath the shrine of Juggernaut, or the white man glorying in his more enlightened knowledge and freedom—all are the subjects of this seed of eternal life. Blessed be God! none are exempt! Like the light of heaven, it penetrates every crevice of the earth, and shines with equal effulgence on all. "God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The ground, as we have observed, is man's heart, and the seed is eternal life planted therein. There is one important feature in the narrative, which is most instructive. The seed tests the character of the soil. It developes its nature, which, but for it, would be unknown.

It is not like anything that was in the soil before. It is quite a new and distinct thing. It finds nothing there that is in the remotest degree assimilated to it. It is not a principle in the soil, which the Lord acts on and improves. It comes from heaven and it leads to heaven. No sooner is it planted in the ground, than it begins and continues to rise, for it is of such an opposite nature that it cannot remain in its dark and grovelling element. It has no sympathy with it whatever.

The application of all this is exceedingly simple. There is no good thing in man's heart, nothing that bears the slightest resemblance whatever to the divine seed of eternal life. Nor is there anything, moreover, capable of being improved; nothing which if worked upon by the Lord can be made, in the smallest degree, to resemble the heavenly thing God puts into it; nothing whatever. There may be the way-side soil, the stony ground soil, or the good ground soil. But it is *soil* still. "There is no difference." There may be the way-side heart, trodden down by loads of sin; there may be the stony ground heart, having much of a good natural disposition, many excellent qualities, amiable, lovely, and of good report; there may be the good ground heart, with the heavenly seed *in* it, but not *of* it; nevertheless, it is the *heart* still in each case—"the heart, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." And the seed develops, as we have remarked, the true character of the ground. The Gospel of eternal life draws out what is in the heart. It is to man's heart, what Christ was to the world. He brought to light man's hidden enmity. He developed man's wretchedness, and guilt, and ruin. He was like the light of heaven shining through the crevices of the prisoner's cell, revealing the dungeon darkness within.

So also is the Gospel seed, falling into the ground of man's heart. It brings to view all within it—its enmity to God, its carnal, worldly, sin-loving nature. It displays a chamber of imagery, wherein are all manner of foul and hateful things. It reveals his moral weakness, his spiritual nakedness, his utter destitution and misery. Such is the seed and the ground—the Gospel and man's natural heart.

Let us now look at the four different classes of hearers.

The first class described, are those of the way-side. The striking feature presented in this case is, that the seed is only on the *surface*. This was not the intention of the sower. What agriculturist intends his seed to remain on the surface? His great design is that it may sink into the ground, take root, and bring forth fruit. Fruit can never spring from seed on the surface. In order to take root at all, it must do so where *no eye sees it*. It must be hidden in the earth. So also with the heavenly seed. If it is to take root, it must sink into the heart. It must take root where no eye sees it but God's. This seed, however, does not do this. It remains on the surface. It has fallen *on* the wayside, but not *into* it. There it remains for a little moment, a prey to every foe. The first breath of wind may blow it away. The first foot-step passing over it may crush it. The fowls of the air may devour it up. The last of these is the great foe in this case. They are ever on the watch for food, hovering in the steps of the sower as he scatters the seed broadcast around him. Scarcely has he advanced a few paces, than they are seen flocking down to snatch up the scattered corn-grains. Small though their eyes are, yet can they see the smallest seed at a greater distance than man, or any other creature. These birds of the air are compared in the interpretation to

Satan. Scarcely has the heavenly sower scattered the Gospel seed on the heart, than "Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the Word sown." He, like the figure under which he is described, can see a great distance, much farther than man can. And he is ever on the watch, hovering in the steps of the Gospel sowers, and plucking away the seed as quickly as it is sown. Is it a seed from the Word of God for a moment arresting the attention? It may not be *true*, he suggests. Is it a seed sown in conversation? A friend or neighbour comes in to speak of something altogether foreign to it, and so it is pushed out of view. Is it a passing thought of eternity, for which the soul is unprepared, that arrests it? Oh! there is time enough to think of that before you die. Is it some sudden warning which seems to haunt the soul in every step it takes, with its solemn echoes? Time or pleasure, or the pressing round of worldly duties, banish the faithful but unwelcome messenger from the heart, and it sinks into its wonted apathy. Thus does Satan watch the seeds as they fall from the hand of the sower, and pluck them away.

But why does not the seed sink into the wayside ground? Is there any fault in that soil more than in the others? None. The soil of each is the same. What, then, makes the difference between the way-side and the good ground? Only one thing,—the plough. The good ground has been ploughed up, the way-side has not. Here is the great difference. Here is the explanation of the contrast. The Spirit of God ploughs up the ground of the heart, before He casts in the seed of the kingdom. Let us not look for the explanation in any other quarter, for we shall not find it. The seed is in every case the same, and equally good. The ground is

in every case the same. But in the one case the Holy Spirit has entered the hard, way-side heart. He has broken it up. He has made it soft. He has prepared it to receive the seed, and there alone does the seed take root, and meet the sower's expectations. This, I believe, is the great lesson God would teach us in this parable. The heart must be ploughed up by the Spirit of God, or the seed can never take root there. "Ye *must* be born again," was the Saviour's emphatic declaration. The heart is like the way-side, incapable from its very nature, of receiving the seed, without the operation of God's Holy Spirit. The sower is not enough; the seed is not enough; unless He accompany the work. How is it, otherwise, that all who hear the Word are not converted? How is it that the seed sown does not take root? We answer, because the plough has not been there. The Spirit of God has not broken the heart for sin, has not made it soft under a sense of its guilt and condemnation, has not so prepared it, as to draw in with delight the seed that falls from the sower's hand. Marvel not, reader, at this. Does it disturb you? Is there awakened in your heart, some latent rebellion at the thought of your *inability* to receive the Gospel? Then is there something of this way-side heart in *you*. Cavil not at it. Away with all ambiguous reasoning. Your heart must be ploughed up by the Spirit of God, or you never can receive one grain of the Gospel seed. You must be born again, before you can either "see," or "enter into" the kingdom of God. From this I cannot let you pass. Here God's Word holds you, and here must I hold you too. Your religion is nothing more than a gilded bauble, if your heart have not undergone this Divine operation, this complete upturning and overturning of its old and carnal nature, under the sharp

edge of God's spiritual plough. Deceive not yourself with the notion, that there is in your religion one grain of anything pleasing to God. Think not there is anything in it that will ever recommend you to God's favour. Dream not for a moment of it being the work of the Spirit, lacking this, the primary evidence of His work. No: Your religion, with all its attractiveness, with all that in it that man esteems so highly, and that draws forth the plaudits of the multitude, is tinsel and dross, a fabrication of the natural heart, a guilty rival to the one God has set up in His Word. Satan is deceiving you. Your religion—*your religion*, I repeat it—is the great barrier between you and heaven. Your way-side religion, that has never yet been overturned in your heart; your heart that has never yet felt God's Holy Word, entering it like a plough, piercing it with a conviction of its sin and misery, and leading it to delight in Christ, in His Word, and in His ways. This, reader, stands between you and eternal life. This is what is deceiving you. This is hardening you each day in self-righteousness. This is shutting out every ray of spiritual light from the midnight chamber of your soul. This is the great hold that Satan has on you. Oh! that you could be awakened, that the arrow might penetrate, and prostrate you, stricken and wounded, at the feet of Christ. Then would the seed of heaven take root, spring up, and bear fruit. Then would the Heavenly Husbandman no longer come, year after year, to gaze on a barren fig-tree, mocking His longing spirit and anxious labours; but would behold in you the travail of His soul, and rejoice.

One striking feature of the way-side hearer is recorded by St. Matthew. "When any one heareth the Word of the kingdom and *understandeth* not." We see here that

the understanding is at fault. They cannot "see" the kingdom of God, much less "enter" therein. The plough is required to enlighten the understanding, as well as to save the soul. "The *entrance* of Thy Word giveth light," says the Psalmist; but then the veil must be removed. The hearers of the Word, if they do not understand, are those Satan is most busy with. He is present to snatch from the heart the very remembrance of the truth, lest it should enter in.

But who are these way-side *hearers*? They are nominal professors of Christianity. They are church and chapel goers. So far their religion extends. To be without some such religion would compromise them in society. It would not leave their consciences, either, quite comfortable. They put off the week's follies to go, for form's sake, or fashion's sake, to the house of God. They sit in their pews. The seed falls on the way-side hearts, but they hear not, or if they hear, they understand not. The past week's scenes crowd on the mind, even while listening to the sounds of salvation. Its business or pleasure, its gains or losses, its follies and sins, rush into the soul like a flood, and drown every other thought. Thus they get through their formal service, and have scarcely quitted the sanctuary when, to judge from their conversation, no one would suppose for a moment they had been at such a place. Thus Sunday after Sunday passes over. Thus year after year. Then death comes and finds them all unprepared for eternity. There is not one feeling or taste of the heart for the holiness of heaven. A clergyman is sent for to pray with them, or to administer the Sacrament. Then God is sought, but, alas! rarely found. Religion is left to the sick bed, to the

writhings of pain, to the agonies of disease, to the wandering of the brain, to the throes of death. The curtain falls, and the world goes on in the same beaten path as before. We see the marble monument with its *lying* epitaph, but we see not the God-forgetting spirit. We see not the life, in the books before the great white throne. We hear not the everlasting sentence. They are gone. Our next meeting-place will be the bar of God. Awful thought! But we dare not lift the veil. Here is the history of the way-side hearer. Reader, is it *yours*?

Let us turn now to the second class described by our Lord. "And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun was up it was scorched; and because it had no root it withered away." This case differs materially from the last. There is earth here; earth, not like the former, trodden down and hard, but soft, and to some extent, capable of receiving the seed. There seems much about it to encourage our expectations. But then there is here, as in the last case, something wanting. The ground is apparently soft, but it has not been done by the *plough*. It is, perhaps, naturally so. The seed falls and appears to have taken root. But scarcely has the sun reached the meridian before it withers. All its fair promises have vanished. The place that knew it knows it no more. It has disappeared as quickly as it came. How is this? Beneath the fair exterior there lies concealed the stone. The ground was not ploughed up. The stone had not been broken in pieces. Hence its deceptive character and fruitlessness.

How many are there in the world of this class! There is much about them, like the earth, that is good; much

that appears to bear the stamp of Divine grace. We are encouraged. We see an amiable temper, a sweet natural disposition, a love of good things. This is the *earth*. Education has produced it, not the Spirit of God. Association with the good has left its impress on the natural character. There are warm feelings, easily excited to tears under the sound of the Gospel. There is an earnest start made on the heavenward road. There is a rapid and astonishing change produced in them. There is a glare and glitter that dazzles us. We are arrested, and secretly thank God that another wanderer has been gathered so quickly to the fold. Ah! this is the *earth*. This is nature all the while, not the Spirit. This is the dazzling but evanescent meteor, not the pure and ever shining star. This is "the gourd that springs up in a night," not "the tree planted by the rivers of waters." This is the spurious counterfeit, not the genuine coin from the mint of heaven. Beneath the gilding so lovely and attractive, there is concealed the stone. *This* is the true character of the heart, not the beautiful exterior. It is the "stony heart" still. It is the old heart under a new covering. Remove this precious rubbish, and there you behold inscribed the old motto—*enmity to God*. This is the great hinderer of the seed. It was all well enough till it reached *that*. It could spring up and present promises of blossom and fruit; but it had not changed. Let trials come. Let persecution, or affliction, or temptation arise. The blade droops, the blossom falls, and the stalk lies upon the ground withered and lifeless. Yes, there are thousands such on every side. Their *natural* character is far in advance of many who are truly converted. They pass for children of God, for there is so much like God about them. But

their religion, beautiful as it may be, is only nature's wretched copy. The heart has never felt the keen edge of the Spirit ploughing it up. They have never been convinced of sin. They have never been emptied of self-righteousness. The heart has never been brought to delight itself in God. Their religion lasts, so long as all goes well with them. They can conform to the ways of God's people. They can meet in His house for prayer and praise. They can find time to engage in the society, the school, the bazaar. So long as fortune smiles, and life's sea is without a wave or a ripple, so long are they Christians. But let the night of trial come. Let the elements threaten, and the billows of trial or suffering, for the truth's sake, arise. Alas! how is the beautiful vision dispelled! The unchanged heart shows itself. Christ is released, and the world is grasped with tenfold eagerness.

And what is another phase of the stony heart? The seed falls and springs up quickly, but cannot take root because of the hidden stone that hinders it. So is it with many. The seed falls, but what hinders it from taking root? Some stone of secret sin lodged in the heart. See that noble ship riding on the waves! Her yards are right, her canvass is spread, and there is a favourable breeze. Why sails she not out of the harbour? Why heaves she so restlessly on the waters without moving? Down deep in the water and concealed from every eye is the anchor. This holds her fast. What avail favouring tides and breezes? Nothing whatever. Cut off the anchor, and then with God's breath helping her, she may move on. So is it with many a soul. There they are from year to year, and never move one step heavenwards. The same in youth, the same in manhood, the same in hoar

hairs. Why are they not in the race? Why still lagging behind, in the world of sin and death? Ah! down deep in the muddy streams of the deceitful heart there lies the anchor of secret sin, holding fast the noble vessel that should be freighted with God's glory, and on its way to Canaan. What avail the favouring gales of God's Spirit, ministers and preachers at the helm, and calm seas of Gospel invitations and encouragements, in which it may be wafted to glory? Nothing whatever. There is the secret lust the heart cannot renounce, some grasping covetousness it cannot give up, some carnal affection it cannot mortify, or some inveterate habit it is unwilling to overcome. These are the anchors holding down the vessel. These are the stones in many a heart. Man may not see them; they are so concealed under the plausible exterior, but God does. There they are, and there they have been for many a year, the closed door to God's truth ever entering in. There is the stony heart, indeed, without these, but these are stones within stones, that not a grain of seed can ever enter. Nothing can avail but the plough. The Spirit of God must enter, must upturn and overturn. Till then, all the forces of morality, outward religion, or anything else you can name, will be powerless as the air. All will prove impenetrable to the hard rock. Talk of working on man's will by means of education and religion! Does not man's will go with his heart? Does it not move in the same stream? Can anything on earth bend it, but the Spirit of the Living God? If heaven with all its glories were offered to man. if he would only change his will, from being a child of the devil, to become a child of God, could he do it? He never could. If he could, we should have no need of the Spirit. But it is not so. Blessed be God!

one touch of the keen edge of God's Word, entering the heart under the Spirit's direction, can do it all. It can break up the hard heart. It can melt the flinty rock. It can make the good seed take root, spring up, and bear fruit to the praise of His Holy Name.

And before we pass on to consider the third class, what may we learn from the "*immediate*" springing up of the seed? It teaches that God requires *depth* in our religion. It should grow where man sees it not. It should be casting its roots within the veil. On what depends the strength, the beauty, and the fruit of the tree? On its hidden roots. So with the Christian. What he is outwardly will depend on his hidden life before God. This is what we want now. The age we live in is a very superficial one. We live in a day when men can be Christians one day, and anything the next; when men can talk of the deep things of God in one breath, and the things of the world in the next; when the great aim of the many is just to save their character; to go with the worldling or the infidel up to that point. To advance beyond would stake their Christian *reputation*, otherwise they would soon do even that. It is an easy, indulgent, self-loving, half-hearted Christianity that surrounds us. The religion of the many lacks depth. It is in the head and on the tongue, far more than in the heart. It *speaks* too loud; it *tells* too little. There is the face of Moses, but not the shining of God's presence in it. The world looks on, and says nothing, but ponders deeply. It is keen to notice a flaw, in one of God's people. It can see a blot there, sooner than anywhere else. It has a place in the memory for *that*, when memory is very bad. Oh! we want more depth. We want to be more in God's presence. We want more decision for Christ. We want more hearty

renunciation of the vile self that reigns within us. This is the lack of our age. Reader, see to it that your testimony before the world, is clear and unequivocal. See to it that you are on the Lord's side. The Lord is coming, and will soon be here. Live as you would live, if He were to come before nightfall. Beware, I beseech you, of a superficial religion, a divided heart for God.

We turn now to the next class mentioned in the parable. "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit." In this parable we observe a gradually advancing stage. In the first, the seed lies on the surface. In the second, it has a little earth. In the third, it takes root and springs up. Yet in none of these is the advance *progressive*. They are all rather from bad to worse. The evil varies, but that is all. The entire three develop the bad state of the ground—hard, stony, and thorny. The third class of ground received the seed, but as in the former case, so in this, there was something *hidden* that neutralized all the sower's efforts. There were old thorny roots there. These are the natural fruits of the ground. The heart of man can bring forth fruit, even in its natural state, and here it is—*thorns*. But it cannot produce fruit from the good seed. It may produce the blade, but not the fruit. Like the last case, it only mocks the toils of the sower. It raises expectations never to be realized.

All this is a striking picture of another class of mankind. There is much earth, much that is good about them. There is much more to encourage than in the former case, for the good seed takes root. They hear the Word of God. They rejoice in it. They like faithful, earnest preaching. The solemn concerns of eternity are no trifling matters with

them ; they are all important. Their views of the Gospel are sound. They can speak of the things of God, with clearness and fluency. They are foremost in the ranks, to help on the Lord's work. This is very good, and goes on for some time. But down deep in the heart, smothered up from the eye of man, there are the old roots of the natural heart. Religion has lopped off the thorn *branches*, so that man can see none ; but it has left the *roots* there. These it has failed to extirpate. Only the *plough* can reach them. And now, these begin to spring up again. Vicious propensities, evil habits, smothered lusts,—up they come, little by little. Religion is a most advantageous cloak for them, but there they are, and will shortly develop themselves. The thorn-roots *will* spring up. The seed may take root and spring up with them, but it will not bring forth fruit with them. All that has appeared in the heart so far, is only the blade ; or, at most, the unripe ear. Beyond this nothing appears. It lacks in the very thing for which the Sower planted it—fruit. In our Lord's interpretation of this parable, He describes one of these thorns as the “cares of the world.” A young family is gathering thickly round the hearth. They must be provided for. Then comes the ever pressing anxiety about the means. Business undertakings, involving speculation and risk, are entered into. They bring a load of cares. Then come anxieties about our reputation as men of business, our credit with society should these fail. Then there are other cares of every name and shape. Some in our families, things going most unaccountably across. Some with bleeding hearts, striving to heal a divided household. Some with other calamities of a peculiarly trying and private nature. These are only a few of the “cares of

this world," which absorb the mind and heart, and choke the good seed.

Another thorn that chokes the seed is "the deceitfulness of riches." By riches here, we are not to understand money merely, but whatever we may abundantly possess. Business prospers. All our worldly affairs seem bright. There is much goods laid up for many years. Our influence is extensive. Our credit is unbounded. Perhaps popularity is weaving garlands for the brow, the laurels of fame encircling our path on every side. Ah! these are only "the deceitfulness of riches." They may take wing before nightfall, and leave the heart stricken and wounded. They are but the bubble on life's uncertain sea, in which is reflected for a moment the fading hues of sunset. The next ripple may dispel them. The least touch of the Almighty's breath may wither them away. Oh, how deceitful are they! Here to-day; gone to-morrow. The gourd spreading itself majestically over the head at noon; to-morrow withered and dead, with a worm revelling at its root. Oh, "the deceitfulness of riches!" Yet see how they deceive multitudes! See how the heart is wrapped up in them! See what a pillow it constructs from them on which to repose! Alas! the heart is full and soon forgets God. The good seed is choked. Then there are "the lusts of other things." "Other things!" What are they? Other things than *Christ*. No matter what they may be—worldly, sensual, devilish, or innocent, harmless, lawful. Other things than Christ,—these, too, choke the seed. Only one thing can nourish it and make it fruitful; that is Christ. "Other things" may go so far as to make it spring up, but only Christ can make it bear *fruit*. And mark, it *need* not be "other things" that choke the seed. Business is right. Household duties are right. Due care

is right. Desire to excel is right. It is not these that choke the seed. It is "the *lusts* of other things." The *supremacy* of them in the heart. In the natural man, these "other things" are always "lusts." Lusts are the thorn-roots of the natural heart. The plough must overturn them. Only this can put the ground in its right state, with regard to "other things." Only the grace of God savingly in the heart, can keep them in their place, and prevent their unlawful usurpation of its throne. Under all circumstances the throne is God's, and "other things," must be His subjects. Where the Spirit of God is not ruling within, however, and bringing all things into subjection to Him, there is ever this form of idolatry. In the hearts of many who denounce its outward form, there is as much of this kind of idolatry as in the benighted heathen, or the superstitious papist. Man's natural heart must have its idols; and if God sway not the sceptre within him, his idol will. The "other things" will become "lusts." The world, the flesh, and the devil must predominate. The heart is their domain. There is way-side hardness there; stones and thorny roots. No seed can ever bear fruit from such a soil till the plough—the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit—has driven its keen edge through, overturned stones and roots, and made it soft and fruitful. This is the preparation of the heart by God. This is what the Spirit must do. It is His office and work. In every case of true conversion, He goes before the Lord to *prepare His way*. It is His to "break up the fallow ground." It is His to give "the broken and the contrite heart." And, again we repeat it, unless this preparatory work be done by Him, all the moral and religious forces in the world brought to bear on man's will, will prove utterly powerless.

Reader, whoever you are, learn one lesson from this parable of the seed sown in the thorny ground. You cannot have fruitful seed and thorns *together*. You cannot have Christ and the world together. If you will give your heart to riches, or to "the lusts of other things," you must part with Christ. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Do not try to serve *both*, but be honest, and give up either the one or the other. Do not, try, as thousands do, to reach the Celestial city with Christ in one hand and the world in the other, and then drop both at its gates. Thousands have tried it and failed. Thousands are trying it now and will fail also. Thousands yet unborn will play the same desperate but foolish game, and have the same end. Read God's unchanging law, "*ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" Read it and be wise. Read it and serve God. Read it and have no fellowship with a world that murdered the Holy One of God, and would do the same deed again in this *enlightened* age, if it were in its power.

Christian reader, beware of the influence of the thorns over your heart. Let the plough of God's Spirit be continually driven through to keep the roots from springing up. If you are "rich" in temporal blessings, or have much to do with "other things" than Christ, or have many of the world's "cares" on your mind, beware, lest they choke the good seed. See that they interfere not with your communion with God. If your heart is in these things, it cannot have unhindered fellowship with the Saviour. The wheels of the spiritual chariot will drag heavily, and in nothing will you feel it more than in prayer. You will soon come down in heart, in spirit, and

in practice, to the low level of the world. You will secretly feel that your strength has gone, and all real happiness and peace will quickly follow. Oh! watch your thorny heart, then. "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Let us now notice the fourth and last class described by our Lord. "And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. And He said unto them, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." We are presented in this class with a striking contrast to everything that has gone before. It is seed that brings forth fruit. Out of the four cases, only this one meets the sower's expectations. This proceeds from the circumstance that the ground is good. But if the ground signifies the natural heart, how can this be? It is good, not in itself, but by virtue of what has been done to it. What is that? It has been *ploughed up*. This, and this alone, makes the difference between it and the way-side ground; between it and all the others. Not the ground itself. No; the way-side ground was quite as good as the good ground; or, to speak more correctly, the good ground was quite as *bad* as the way-side ground. "There is no difference." The heart of the holiest man on earth is as bad as the vilest profligate that ever stained the calendar of Newgate or Tyburn. The good thing in it is foreign to it, a new and distinct thing that comes down from heaven. The plough, we repeat it, has made the difference between the way-side ground and the good. The Spirit of God, who has gone before and *prepared* the heart by ploughing it up, in order that it may receive the seed, has made the difference between the saint and the sinner. Nothing else. And now the Gospel seed springs up and brings forth fruit.

This meets the sower's expectations, for thus He speaks, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." And again. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

But it is not *fruit* only that He desires; it is "*much* fruit." The character of the seed is progressive. We are told that it not only "sprang up and brought forth," but it "increased." This is its nature when planted in a heart prepared of the Spirit to receive it. This is what the Lord desires. Grace is a ladder of many steps, and he who is a child of grace, and with his feet on that ladder, should be ever *ascending*. Nothing in Nature or Providence is stationary. "Onward and upward" is written in living characters on the least and the greatest, on the tiny sapling that springs out of the earth, and the majestic oak waving in stately grandeur. All have an upward tendency. Each plant, and herb, and tree, rises out of dark obscurity, spurns its grovelling existence, and stretches its pinions to heaven in ten thousand varied forms from our teeming earth. Some shooting upwards, attracted by the light of heaven, and standing like the lord of the forest in their own strength; others, creeping like the delicate ivy, by means of stones, and weed, and rubbish, till it bathes its tendrils in the light of heaven, hanging in graceful festoons from the church tower or the castle wall. As it is in nature, so in grace. Like the trees and herbage around, ever forcing themselves upward, so does the good seed in the Christian's heart rise towards heaven. It forces its way up from the ground because it has no sympathy with it. The new nature in the believer is ever rising from his heart because it is his enemy. It is "desperately

wicked." He never looks into *it* for good, for he knows it has none. He looks upward at Christ, not downward into his heart. Just as soon could the ear of wheat grow downward, as could he find good in his heart. No. All good is upward, and there he looks, too. The light of heaven attracts him, and under its influence he is drawn. His new nature tends in the direction of *home*—the place from whence it came. He knows that thorn-roots are in his heart, but they cannot spring up so as to choke the seed, for the plough is there—the Word of God, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to cut them down. He loves to have them cut down; and He longs for the time when the sower shall come and gather the seed into His garner, and when his heart shall have no more thorns within it.

In our Lord's interpretation of the seed sown in the good ground, there are two points to which we must refer. He says, "these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the Word, and *receive* it." This is the character of the Christian—a *receiver*. He is not a *giver*, for he has nothing to give. God will not be a debtor to man; man must ever be a debtor to God. In keeping with this he is called by St. Paul "a *vessel* of mercy." Beautiful and significant emblem! A vessel can *receive* all, but can *give* nothing. So with the child of God. He is "a vessel" to, receive the "Word" which the Spirit of God has inclined his heart to hear. He first *empties* the heart, and it then becomes the vessel. Thus prepared by the Holy Spirit, it *receives* the Word with joy. It is exactly the thing it was looking for. It is exactly the thing that suits it. It is adapted to its end—the bringing forth of "much fruit."

The next point is one from which we may take encouragement. Though the Saviour speaks of "*much* fruit," yet let us not decide the word by our measures. The "*much*" to Him is "*thirty*" fold as well as a "*hundred*." It is not much in *quantity* or *degree*, but in *principle*. The patient endurance; the humble self-denial; the lowly, but unsuccessful effort; the faithfulness in small matters; these are the stars in the canopy of grace, differing, indeed, from the "*greater lights*," but still reflecting the glory of their Maker. These are the "*much fruit*" which God looks upon with delight. These will call down the "*well done, good and faithful servant*, because thou hast been faithful over a *few* things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Yes: these, and not the ostentatious donation, the blazoned act of self-denial, the pompous display of charitable benevolence. Ah! many a man has been applauded for his great deeds of benevolence and charity, when God has said, "*I saw no benevolence in it.*" The judgment of the Lord has reversed, and will yet publicly reverse many, if not most of the judgments of this world! God sees not as man sees. Blessed be His Holy Name for ever that it is so! Then, obscure and lowly Christian, menial in a household, servant in a shop, sick one shut up in a garret or hovel, be encouraged, and press onward. God forgets not the "*thirty*" fold, though far below the "*hundred*." The least, *here*, at least, is mentioned first, (probably because Mark was himself a *servant* and we speak of things through our own position,) that none may be discouraged. Whether a "*hundred*," or "*sixty*," or "*thirty*," or ten—all is treasured up by Him. Not one deed of lowly love is forgotten. Not one act of self-denial is unrecorded. All are treasured up in the

book of life, and shall be confessed, ere long, before an assembled world, at the coming of the day of God. "Wherefore, my beloved brother or sister, be ye stedfast unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Before we close, let us dwell for a moment on some prominent features in this parable, containing lessons of vital importance to each of us.

The first is one to which we have alluded; the ground, though possessing the good seed, cannot bring forth fruit till it be previously ploughed; so neither can the Gospel take root in the heart till it be previously ploughed up and prepared by the Spirit of God.

Secondly, we learn the great evil of superficial religion. The seed, in the first two cases, was on the surface in reality, though not in actual appearance. That, sown on the stony ground, sprang up "immediately." Here was its fault. It wanted "*depth*." In order to have depth in our religion, it should not be of that *immediate* character. God teaches us here that truth is the most enduring and the most fruitful in the heart when it is *gradual*. True religion was never designed, like Jonah's gourd, to spring up in a night, and last only for a night. It was not intended to be like the meteor, glare and dazzle in the darkness for a moment, and then vanish for ever. No; but, like the evening star, always to be found in its place, irradiating its sphere with its own unsullied brightness. This is the great sin of our age—superficial religion. This is its great want—depth; to be like the tree which no storm can uproot, because its strength is where no eye sees it—in its roots: to be deriving its strength from a hidden Christ;

to find its true enjoyment, its brightest prospects, its only life, worth calling life, within the veil. This is religion in its depth and strength and power. Reader, is *yours* anything of this character ?

Lastly, we have a solemn warning of the awful amount of profession there is in the world. Out of *four* lots of seed sown, only *one* bare fruit. Only one fourth of that which made a profession was gathered into the garner.

Reader, this is solemn, and should suggest a question to your heart. Is *my* religion of the right kind ? Is my soul *safe* ? The Lord's people are a "little flock." "Wide is the gate, and broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat. Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it." Of four grounds, only one was genuine. Of ten who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, only five were what they appeared to be. It is the same now, and will be till the Lord comes. No improvement till then, but degeneracy, like the three first states of ground, from *bad* to *worse*. No improvement till then ; not one jot or tittle, at least, in a *heavenward* direction. Deceive not yourself with such an idle chimera. The Laodicean age is fast setting in. Wickedness is tenfold on the increase. Scarcely a week lapses that the columns of the press do not record acts of crime with which past history fails to furnish any parallel, all telling us that wickedness is advancing with gigantic strides. "The love of many is waxing cold. Men's hearts are failing them for fear, looking after those things that are coming on the earth." "Wars and rumours of wars" are on every side. "Distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring." Scoffers, haters, and revilers of the truth are in the very bosom of the Christian

Church. Rationalist scoffers under the impious cloak of the lawn and the surplice. Worldly scoffers under the false guises of religion. Scoffers of every name and shape in the Church and out of it. Reader, and especially Christian reader, read their interpretation; listen to the sounds of the midnight alarum, as they come peal after peal from the watch tower, on the heights of Zion—"behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." Reader, is there oil in *your* vessel? Is your lamp burning? See to it, for "the door" will soon be "shut!"

"A little while," our Lord shall come,

And we shall wander here no more;

He'll take us to our Father's home,

Where He for us has gone before—

To dwell with Him, to see His face,

And sing the glories of His grace.

"A little while"—He'll come again:

Let us the precious hours redeem;

Our only grief to give Him pain,

Our joy to serve and follow Him.

Watching and ready may we be,

As those that long their Lord to see.

"A little while"—'t will soon be past,

Why should we shun the promised cross?

Oh let us in His footsteps haste,

Counting for Him all else but loss:

Oh how will recompense His smile,

The sufferings of this "little while."

"A little while"—come, Saviour, come!

For Thee Thy Bride has tarried long;

Take Thy poor wearied pilgrims home,

To sing the new eternal song,

To see Thy glory, and to be

In every thing conform'd to Thee!

THE BURDEN-BEARER.

PSALM lv. 22.

THE arcana of nature presents a varied and diversified aspect. Elements the most opposite and conflicting, intermingle sights and scenes the most attractive. There is the rushing torrent and the silent stream, the roaring waterfall and the brook's gentle ripple, the tempestuous ocean and the quiet river, the heavy thunder-cloud brooding over the horizon, but it is skirted with the rays of the noonday sun, the shadow playing fitfully on the surface of the lake, but all around is the radiance of the golden sunset.

Faithful and true picture of human life!

There is the merry laugh that betrays the secret pang it would conceal. There is the smile playing fitfully on the countenance, while the brow is shaded with sorrow. There is the speaking eye, but the tear droops from the eyelid. There is the light footstep of youth, but the heavy burden of grief within.

Yes; the world is a vale of tears. Its highways are thronged with pilgrims bearing their heavy burdens, burdens which no eye can see and no human heart can fully comprehend, and borne by thousands, with faint and weary footsteps. If we could only draw aside the artificial curtain that society throws around its inner life, what a picture would be disclosed! How many moistened eyes where we thought all was bright and fair! How

many bleeding hearts where we thought peace reigned within! How many sins and sorrows, how much weeping and wailing and agony would that new and undisclosed kingdom bring to light! Oh, that a weary, broken-hearted world knew the divine panacea for its many maladies! Then would its desert blossom as the rose! Then would its wilderness and solitary place be glad, and rejoice even in the midst of sorrow!

The passage we have selected for consideration supplies this divine panacea. It is the utterance of one who knew what sorrow and suffering were, who waded some of the deepest waters of affliction, and who could therefore speak from experience when he said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He *shall* sustain thee." Let us notice a few of the leading features in it, and endeavour to derive the consolation which it affords, that so we may be able to appropriate it with the same confidence of faith. The two prominent features of the passage are—

First, the Burden-Bearer;

Secondly, the Burdens, and their purposes.

It is not every one that we can make the repository of our heart and its sorrows. In this world of ours, where self is the ruling motive of most, all the elements that constitute true sympathy are rarely found concentrated in one individual. The essential one is doubtless affection. But there is much more required than even affection, precious as it is, to unlock the treasures of the heart. The key has many wards. and love is one, but only one. Love is frequently unwise. Nay, has it not been said with much truth that the deepest affection is generally the most impolitic? It needs more than this to solve the heart's

deep problems, and to bind up its wounds and bruises. Experience must come in, together with a well directed judgment and understanding. Affection without these will accomplish little, but with these it may do much. These, however, are only a few of the elements of which it is made up. In the machine which supports the superincumbent weight, there are many small joints and wheels and bands, each of which is adapted to some great end, and contributes to the perfection of the instrument. So is it in all true sympathy. What discernment, discrimination, and cautious approaches are necessary; how are manner, looks, and tones of voice called into requisition to draw out the burdened heart, made doubly sensitive by the keen edge of sorrow and affliction!

Now the passage implies that the Lord is just the one we need. What experience did He not learn by the things which He suffered! With hunger and thirst, weariness and faintness, temptation and trial, tears and sorrow, suffering and agony He was familiar. There was not a stage in man's dark history He did not pass through. Never has there lived or breathed a child of Adam whose experience did not meet its full climax in Him. As human nature had its perfection in His Person, so had human sympathy in His heart. What love, tenderness, and sympathy as a Brother! What wisdom, experience, and judgment as a Man! He has bound Himself to us in the natural bonds which unite us to each other. He pledges His sympathy in all our burdens, whether of body or soul; in poverty and straits, in weariness and fasting, in fear and anxiety, in temptation and desertion, for He has passed through them all, and has become "the Brother born for adversity," "the Captain of our salvation made perfect through sufferings."

And, Christian reader, have not some of us already known Him thus? What has Christ not been to us from childhood to the present hour! What has He not been to us in our days of sinful blindness, and in our days of still more sinful contempt! In our sinning and repenting, our returning and relapsing, loving us still! Following us in all our wanderings, and loving us in all our falls, with a love undeserved, yet never cooled; slighted, yet never turned away! What has He not been to *us* in time of sickness, and what have *we* not been to Him in time of health! Has not His countenance shone upon us in the darkness of sorrow and bereavement, and has not our face been turned *from* Him when the light came back to our homes again? Has He not bound up our broken hearts, consoled the mourner, upheld the sinking, visited the path of the lonely, the hiding-place of sorrow, the pains of sickness, and the pallet of the dying? Have not some of us so known this precious Saviour already, in our homes and hearts? Well might the Psalmist exclaim with holy confidence, as he took a retrospective glance at the Lord's dealings with his own soul, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He *shall* sustain thee."

But let us glance at some of life's many burdens. We must not forget that what is a burden to one may not be to another. *One* may smile at what is pressing another down with a load which he feels to be intolerable, while he, on the other hand, may regard the others as equally trifling. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy." Forgetfulness of this takes away from sympathy all its point, and renders it unavailing. He who can smile at another's trouble because it has no magnitude in his eyes, is unfit to administer the

Divine cordial of sympathy, lacking this, one of its first elements. The Word of God supplies us with one of the first principles of true sympathy, "Be of the same mind one toward another. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Thus the heart is *drawn*, and in the drawing of the heart the great difficulty is overcome. The Samaritan has then, with experience and judgment, only to pour in the oil and wine, and relieve the sufferer. With such sympathy at hand to bless, the most afflicted among us have often felt that more than half the burden has been removed. It is thus we shew our true character as ministering angels, brothers and sisters of Him who wept at the grave of Bethany, and who "left us an example that we should follow His steps."

The command to "cast thy burden on the Lord" implies that we are not able to bear the burdens of life ourselves. And does not daily experience confirm this? Does it not give proof that the number is not small of those who faint and sink into despair under the ill mortality is heir to? Life is too rough and temptation too strong for them. They are carried away by the inducements to vice which they cannot resist, or sink under the pressure of troubles they are too feeble to bear. See that poor wretch with the brand of misery deeply graven on his brow! See how stealthily he winds his way in the twilight to yonder craggy rock! He looks round with an anxious gaze, his lip tremulous with emotion. The splash in the stream beneath gives warning of the terrible deed, and that another soul has gone to the bar of its Maker! Why is this? He cannot bear the burden that is pressing upon him. It crushes him beneath its weight. Life has become intolerable, and he rushes into the arms of death to allay the stings of

conscience, or to drown the deeper sorrows of his soul. Alas! the daily columns of the press furnish us with innumerable instances of the kind, all confirming the sad truth that man is too feeble, too helpless, too frail a creature to bear up, in his own strength, against the billows of life's stormy sea. He needs an arm stronger than his fellow man's to lean upon. He needs one to bear the burdens of life for him; and, if he find not such an one, he may be carried down its stream and become a prey to the many dangers that lie so thickly around him.

Some are burdened with a weight of bodily afflictions. Perhaps the weary sufferer has borne them for many a year. Confined to the solitary chamber morning, noon, and night, till the eye has become familiar with every crack and beam; too weary to pray or even to think: unable to rise, and yet tortured with rest. Intolerable weariness has worn away the freshness and elasticity of the spirit, and made the sufferer's couch indeed "the bed of languishing." Death, to such an one, would often be a welcome messenger, life's weary days and hours drag on so heavily. Yet to such does the message come, "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Afflictions spring not from the dust. They are the messages from a Father's hand, and their design is to make us more familiar with Him who alone can help the weary and heavy laden. God draws His people into such peculiarly trying circumstances as to make us weary of everything but Himself. Weary of sin, weary of the world, weary of ourselves, our earthly affections, our rebellious wills, and our stubborn hearts. He sends us "*thorns in the flesh*," for such these afflictions are, to draw the heart and spirit unreservedly to Him. Sometimes nothing else but these

sharp and long continued afflictions will wean us. There is within our hearts such an *inveterate* cleaving to something, it matters not what, below God. Driven like a bird from branch to branch, and from tree to tree, still our idol-loving hearts gravitate. Then God plants a thorn in the *foot* so that we cannot light anywhere, and our only solace is in stretching the wing heavenward. Thus we come to learn the preciousness of leaning upon our Heavenly Father. We wonder that He should have been the *last* resource instead of the *first*. We marvel at the love so determined to make us happy, where alone we can ever be happy, in the Lord. What persevering grace, what continued forbearance, what intense love, to follow us so far and so long, in spite of ourselves. These are "the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." When the Spirit of God leads us to this, how precious is all trial! Who shall be able to tell its blessed results to the soul in eternity? Oh, it is only in heaven we shall be able to see the depths of love, that have been underneath the sharpest strokes of God's hand! Our "new song" will derive its truest and sweetest measure from the afflictions that have been so bitter on earth.

Reader, are *you* one of the Lord's afflicted ones? To you is this precious message sent from the Saviour, "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He shall sustain thee." And if your spirit is overwhelmed within you, let your prayer be, "lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." He may not remove the thorn that buffets you, but He will give strength and grace to bear it. He will give you "songs in the night." He will whisper "fear thou not for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God." Your heart shall rejoice even in the midst of sorrow, and you shall be

enabled to say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Prove this faithful Saviour, and you will find His promise true. "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He *shall* sustain thee."

To some, sin is the great burden. It is not any of the sorrows of daily life, but the conviction of an awakened conscience. The sins of the past roll before the soul in a terrific flood. They seem to assume an awful shape. The iron enters the very depths of the heart. The prospect of standing before an offended God is dreadful. They feel that they dare not lift up their eyes to heaven. They can but smite upon the breast, with their faces in the dust. Thus they go mourning day by day, for there is no comforting assurance of sin put away, and peace with God. It was not always so. There was a time when nothing of this was felt, but now sin has revived and they are miserable. Once they were willing slaves to its power. They felt no sting. They dreaded no future. All was indifference. But now everything is changed. Sins and shame, sorrow for the past and dread of the future, the law of God broken, His grace despised, His mercies rejected, constant anxiety, sleepless nights, the past, the present, and the future, all adding to the burden, make it too heavy to bear. They may seem cheerful, but the heart is in agony. The world is a wilderness, and they feel wretched. Oh what a burden is this! Who can give rest to the troubled spirit bowed down under a weight of sin? Teachers may give knowledge, and physicians may give health, but rest to a heart broken for sin, none can give but He who came to unbind the heavy burden and to set the prisoner free. Poor weary sinner! Listen to His voice bidding you leave your burden at the

cross, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you." He will give you a sense of His pardoning love, and that will refresh you, He will make you feel that your burden was laid on Him, and that will refresh you. He will give you the comforting assurance that you are accepted in the Beloved, and that will refresh you. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Look at Jesus wounded and bleeding on Calvary, and see all thy sin laid on Him. Go not mourning in sorrow, but believe and rejoice. Behold thyself in Him, fully meeting God's infinite justice, satisfying God's righteous demands, and accomplishing all that His righteous law required. Behold thyself in Him, and dry thy tears. "He who knew no sin was made sin for thee that thou mightest be made the righteousness of God in Him." Here is repose for thy troubled heart. Here is peace for thy guilty conscience. Cease thy strivings, thy vain endeavours to *earn* peace! Open thine eyes and behold it thine; thine, the purchase of a Saviour's blood; thine, the gift of His own free unmerited grace; thine, just as thou art, in thy guilty, hell-deserving condition; thine, without any admixture of prayers, or tears, or repentance to appropriate it; thine now; thine freely; thine altogether. "Cast thy burden, then, on thy crucified and risen Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Carry no longer that unbelieving guilty load, but open thine eyes and see it nailed to the cross of Christ. Hear the voice of God crying to thee from Calvary's sacred summit, "I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins. Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more."

To others, severe losses with all their sad consequences

are the burden. To feel the pressure of earthly losses ; to descend from a position of plenty to straitness ; to feel the pinchings of poverty, the loss of social position, and many of the comforts of life ; to look round on things dear and familiar, and miss this and that and the other ; to see fond faces one after another removed, and those that smiled in prosperity now regarding us with averted eye, is surely a severe trial. Yet this is the burden of many of God's people. The world sees them not. They are shut up in the bosom that carries them. Occasionally we see the eye reddened with tears, or hear the deep drawn sigh, but that is all. The *exterior* may betoken nothing out of course ; but shut up in the heart there is a world of trouble and grief that often threatens to burst its frail tenement. The present, discomforts, tears, and sorrows, the future—God only knows. They could once have said "my barns are filled with plenty," but now they are empty and desolate. They are ready to exclaim with one of old, "He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken my crown from my head ; He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass." Yet let such an one (if he be a reader of these pages) not think these are not the Lord's ordering. There is no accident in any of them. They are not mistakes in the Lord's dealings. He has them all in His hand, and not one has overtaken you without His knowledge and permission. No doubt it may seem otherwise to us. No doubt a full cup, a smiling home, many friends, and the horizon over our heads bright and gladdening, may be delightful and desirable, but the Lord sees they are not always good for us. Many a soul is brought to heaven at no other price than the sacrifice of them all. Many a poor votary of the world would be left to die in his sins, but for these heavy strokes from the hand of

God. Many a heart now full of peace and happiness, would, but for such rough dealing, have been full, and forgotten God. Murmur not, then, if God sees fit to give you a rejoicing heart along with an empty purse. There is a day coming, when the rich ones of the world will envy your plain fare, and humble home. There is a day at hand, when Lazarus shall rest from his toils and sorrows and pinching poverty, in a bosom where every want will be for ever met, and when the "sumptuous farers" would willingly have exchanged places with him. No! tried and desolate one, the Lord has not forgotten you. Your wants, whatever they are, shall all be supplied, for "your Heavenly Father *knoweth* that you have need of these things." You may have a rougher passage to Canaan than others, but none shall have a *safer* one. "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Flowers may fade and their beauty perish, leaves may wither and turn to corruption and decay, and a wintry sky wrap your fairest prospects in gloom; but there is One whose Word never was forfeited yet, and never will be, and who has said "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; through the fire, the flame shall not kindle upon thee." You may have to feel the "waters," but you shall also feel that Christ is near you. The rivers may rise to the neck, but no higher. You may feel the heat of "the fire," but no more—not a hair of your head shall be singed. Then yield not to gloomy forebodings. Check each rising unbelief and distrust. You have One that loves you at your side—what can harm you? You have One who loved you and set His seal upon you, and who will not cease to love you now that you are in want. He loved you when you were a poor lost creature, and will He

not love you now that you are His beloved child. Think of what you might have been, if God had not in mercy dashed that full cup to the ground, or sent a worm to the root of that beautiful gourd, or sent desolation to that smiling home, or emptied that vacant chair at your side. Think what you might have been, but for His *rough* dealing. Oh! praise the Lord that you are not as others around you. You may yet have to pass through many trials, but He will draw closer as the night grows darker. He will not let one unneeded thunder-cloud burst over your head, and you shall find the promise true that, "to them that have no might He increaseth strength, and giveth power to the faint." It is in such seasons that your faith is called into exercise. It is at such times, when outward things look darkest, that the peace of God is often fullest in the soul. The Lord gives His people "songs in the night." They rejoice in the midst of sorrow. While the thorn is buffetting, their song is the sweetest, their joy is the fullest. So, reader, let it be with you. If trials press sorely, try to praise Him. If discomforts thicken around you, still strive to praise Him. If the cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, grow larger and darker, still continue to praise Him. If wants press sorely on every side, carry them to your Heavenly Father, and yet mingle your prayers with praises. "The Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night season His song shall be with you." "Why art thou cast down O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for thou shalt yet praise Him, who is the health of thy countenance and thy God." "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

Others are bearing another burden, perhaps the heaviest

of all—bereavement. Yes, bereavement *is* the sharpest arrow from the quiver of God. To love tenderly and deeply, and then to part; to meet together for the last time on earth; to look on that countenance once so bright, now wasted with disease and sinking in death; to catch the last faint smile; to press the clammy lips to ours for the last time; to stand by the cold side of some dear and beloved one, and yet hear no sound, and receive no greeting; to carry to the tomb the heart's fondest treasure, and return to a desolate home, with a blank in the soul that shall never be filled till the morning of resurrection—oh, this is the bitterness of sorrow! But for thee, desolate one, there is sympathy in Jesus. He who wept at the grave of Bethany has entered before thee thy home of sorrow. He has plucked thy fairest flower, and transplanted it to a brighter, a happier, a holier sphere, in order to draw thy affections after it. "Sorrow not as others which have no hope," but carry thy bleeding heart to the Lord. The sympathy of friends can avail thee nothing now. Oh! repair to Him who has ever proved "a covert from the heat, and a hiding place from the storm." He will fill the aching void within thee. He will bind up thy broken heart. He will be more than father, mother, brother, or sister. Remember His precious Word, "When my father and mother (the dearest on earth) forsake me, then the Lord will *gather* me," yea, "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," yea, as the shepherd "gathereth the lambs in his arms," so will the Lord gather thee. Would you have that dear one back again? Would you have him lay aside that crown and glory, and mingle again with the sorrows and sins of life? Would you change that glistening raiment, those robes of

purest white, for the shrouds of earth? Would you hush that new song, and fill the soul again with sighs and wailings? Would you dim that radiant countenance with the tears of a dying world? "Oh no," you say, "I would not." Then, bereaved one, murmur not at the Lord's dealings. If that beloved one be now in glory, if he be now among the white robed multitude, his last sigh heaved, his last tear wept, and for ever beyond the reach of a sorrowing and sinning world, would you upbraid the Lord for it? Nature's fondness would arrest the chariot, and stay the unwelcome messenger. But when the crushing weight of sorrow has yielded and restored to the mind its wonted reflection, think of the joy the unfettered spirit has entered into and say, would it not be the climax of selfishness to wish him once more among earth's cares and tribulations? Be it yours to turn this sad bereavement into prayer. Oh! lay your burden at the Saviour's feet. Let it be the means, as it surely will if you use it aright, of conveying a rich spiritual blessing to your soul. Let it make you more familiar with your precious Saviour, and the heaven that contains your precious treasure, and to which you are each day drawing nearer. Let there be no fretful repining, no hard thoughts of your Lord's dealings, no guilty distance from the throne of grace. Remember your Lord has done it. Remember what He said to the sisters of Bethany, "I am glad for your sakes I was not there." "This sickness is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." Yes, this "untoward calamity" is for *your* sake, impossible as it may seem. It is for your sake—to draw you nearer to God, to make a Saviour more precious, and to weaken the ties that bind you to a dying world. It is "that the Son of God

may be glorified" in your quiet resignation, your increased faith, your heavenliness of spirit, and your manifestation of the mind of Christ to "them that are without." Go, beloved, to the mercy seat. There learn to know more of Him, who has your treasure in His bosom. Open to Him in child-like confidence, those heart-sorrows with which no earthly friend can sympathize. He will bend a gracious ear. He will give give you "songs in the night." He will bear your heavy burden. And when you have crossed life's narrow sea, and mingle with the loved ones gone before, you will thank Him for each trial that made Christ more precious to your soul, and weakened each tie of earth. Your song will be, "He hath done all things well." "Had that dear Saviour not taken my treasure on *before*, I might never have followed it. That brought me here. It is to that I owe, in His hands, this crown and glory, this golden harp, and this "new song." This was the first blow that severed me from the prison of sin, the first golden rivet that bound my soul to heaven. Now I see it all. Father, I bless Thee for Thy chastening rod. I praise Thee for that bitter cup. To Thy Name be all the glory through countless ages." Go, desolate one, and "cast thy burden on the Lord." Prove His faithfulness to sustain thee. Fear not. "The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade on thy right hand. The Lord will preserve thy going out and thy coming in. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber nor sleep." Only "cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

It would be impossible to name the burdens under which others are labouring. They are so many, so various, so peculiar, so private, that they could not well be imagined, much less enumerated. They are as various as the com-

plexion of the countenance, and as diversified. To some, the cares and anxieties, the frettings and uneasiness of each hour, are the burden. Others labour under a constitutionally nervous temperament. They are terrified at their own shadow. They start and tremble at the fluttering of a leaf. Their infirmities are a constant weariness to their spirits. Imagination conjures up evils which have no existence, and never may have. Nervous, sensitive, excitable, every sound acts as a stimulus, and conveys a knell to the poor weak mind. These have a perpetual burden to bear. Others are struggling morning, noon, and night, almost in despair, to heal a divided household. Others have continually before them the dread of coming evil; all spiritual hope is obscured by some mental disease, and this produced by some physical irritation. Others, with pinching poverty at the door, are toiling in the sweat of their brow to sustain a young family, and are often at their wits' end to know where to get the next meal. Others of the weaker sex—mothers, widows, orphans, struggling with delicate health, overstrained energies, and amid difficulties apparently insurmountable to eke out a scanty living, and obtain a shelter from the pitiless storms and tempests of winter. How many a child of God is struggling with pressing domestic claims, and with but slender means to meet them. Who can tell the mind's troubled thoughts, its anxious feelings, and painful forebodings. Oh! the burdens that press upon multitudes, wearing out the elasticity of the spirit, whitening the locks with care, and making the frail body stoop with premature age! No eye sees them, no heart sympathizes, no hand is extended to succour. They are known only to Him "to whom the secrets of all hearts are open, and from whom nothing is

hid." Yet to each and all does the message come, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." The voice of the great Burden-bearer sounds in our ears in loving and inviting accents, "Cast your care upon me; I care for you." Are you in want of many of the necessities and comforts of life? "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things." Are you anxious about many things, not knowing well what to do? "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." Is the way dark before you, are you brought to a stand still, and is perplexity weaving its network round your path? "Who is among you that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." "I will lead the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them." Are you suffering from the unkindness of the world, have fond smiles and greetings given way to alien looks and estranged affection? "The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed; a refuge in every time of trouble." Are temptations sore, and trials bitter? "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "The Lord is faithful who will establish you and keep you from all evil." Are you dreading the future, big with some approaching disaster that threatens to overwhelm you in trouble? "As thy days so shall thy strength be." "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Oh what precious promises to sustain the soul under all circumstances! Then

tried and tempest-tossed child of God, stay thy soul upon them. Prove the faithfulness of God's Word by trusting it. None ever yet did so and were disappointed. You will meet with disappointments from the world. The world has nothing better to offer. It never had. All its promises are disappointments; all its blossoms are fruitless; all its beauteous flowers wither at the first touch. But not so with God. Here all is stability and permanency. A sun that never goes down, a gourd that never withers, a hope that never disappoints, a rock that no tempest can shake. What if your way is rough and your sky dark, still stay yourself on God's everlasting Word. Fresh trials will bring with them fresh strength. New difficulties will bring with them new grace to help you. Carry every cross to the Lord. Lay every burden at His feet. He will give you strength to bear it. He sees every perplexity that encircles you. His eye follows you in all your troubles. There is not a phase in your history that is not marked out and ordered for you by His love. He will not leave you to struggle alone, but will give you needful and seasonable help. And you shall yet see that it has been so. When you have passed through the cloud, God's ordering loving-kindness will be reflected in every step. We do not see these things at the time. But when the cloud has passed over, then we see the rays of love that were shining behind it. So shall it be with you. You shall see the rainbow of covenant mercy spanning each dark cloud. You will wonder, and rejoice, and bless His Name for it. Then trust that precious Saviour. Hold on your way with confidence in His Word. Let every cross carry you to Christ, and then the strength of Christ shall carry you safely through every cross. "Cast

thy burden on the Lord and He shall sustain thee."

But have you not much to be thankful for, notwithstanding your many trials? Take a glance at the Lord's dealings with you and say, desponding child of God. If the Lord has sent you *one* trial, how many blessings has He sent you? If He has removed one mercy, how many more has He not showered down? How much more bitter that *one* trial might have been than it is! How it has been softened with mercy! How many little circumstances have transpired to take away its sting! How many sunbeams have darted through the dark thunder-cloud! Then, look round and compare your case with others. See how different it might have been with you. How many who love and serve the Lord, much more faithfully than you do, are in the deepest of sorrow. Look at the past and the present! See the many mercies that are dotted in your path, instead of the thorns and trials that have been allotted to others, and but for the Lord's mercy might have been apportioned to you. Oh! place your crosses and your blessings side by side, and see how the one outnumbers the other. Why is not your tongue full of praises? Why are you not magnifying the Lord for His goodness? Why that disconsolate look, and that inward disposition to repine and murmur? Oh! banish it for ever, and let those around hear you saying, "See what the Lord hath done for *me*." Place a mercy opposite every cross, and raise your Ebenezer on each one. Then, think of your *spiritual* mercies! Think of the Lord's love to you in His dear Son! Think how He has brought you out of darkness to light, while others are left to garner up the bitter fruits of sin! Why were *you* chosen, and others left behind? Why were you loved with such loving-kindness, and others left to go on in the broad road to

destruction? Should not this awaken new praises from your lips? Should not this fill every vacant niche in your heart with adoring gratitude? Should not this make you bear lovingly and cheerfully, every cross your precious Lord may lay upon you? Oh, then, banish repining, fretfulness, and discontent! Let them have no place in your heart, but thanksgiving, praise, and cheerful resignation to all that the Lord may send you.

But let us learn the reasons why God sends these trials. There can only be one great end in any of them—infinite love. A being made by God, and in God's own image, can find his happiness only in God. It is a proof of man's divine origin that he can find it nowhere else. It is a proof of his fall that he seeks it everywhere but where it can be found—in God. It is for this reason God sends trial. He will make His people happy. This is His great design. This is His unvarying determination. Trials are sent to draw him, and keep him, near to God, the source of all his happiness. They purge away the dross. They purify the fine gold. God must see His image in all His children, but dross cannot reflect it. It must be removed. He has many means of purging it away. The chamber of sickness, days and nights dragging heavily, and making us thoughtful and meditative. Severe losses and disappointments, putting all our earthly hopes to flight, and making the world a wilderness. Increasing trials of every kind, making us feel less dependance on our own helps, and more on God. The arrow of death suddenly entering a household, putting all levity to flight, and drawing our thoughts more seriously to eternity. These, and many others, are the means which God uses to draw His people nearer to Himself and to make them happy. God has His eye upon you every moment.

He sees you gradually but surely wandering from His side, and He sends the unwelcome messenger. You may not be conscious of the degeneracy yourself, but He is, and He cannot, and will not, suffer it. He sees your heart cleaving too fondly to earthly things. Christian diligence and activity do not characterize you as they once did. Your spiritual influence is on the wane. There is a marked change in you outwardly, and you secretly feel that all is not right yourself. So your Heavenly Father smites gently at first, for "He afflicteth not willingly." Perhaps the degeneracy has been going on for some time. It has gathered strength, and requires a harder stroke to waken you up. The soul is often allowed to go on a long time evenly, without much trouble, life's sea tolerably calm and quiet. All this while things have not been going on right with it. It has been unconsciously deteriorating. Carelessness in walk; affections set on forbidden objects; iniquity regarded in the heart; many concessions made to evil; many outward signs of backsliding—these things have gone on for sometime, and have brought on their sad consequences. The peace of God has gone; joy in the Lord has gone; all that calmness and happy superiority to the distracting circumstances of daily life has gone. Ah! the soul has had a fall. So God breaks the long silence with a thunder-stroke. For a moment we are stunned and speechless. Then come, after much rebellion, fretfulness, and infidelity to God, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. As you fell imperceptibly, so you rise imperceptibly. There is now less levity and more solemnity, more tenderness of conscience, more heavenly-mindedness, more watchfulness, more earnestness in prayer, more diligence in Christian duties, more unreserved dedication of heart to God, more

sympathy with others, more, in heart thought and spirit, of real living to the Lord. These are the fruits of trial to many of God's people. These are the precious results of the Husbandman's pruning knife on the vine branch. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

Reader, have these been the results of God's dealings with you? Are you now bringing forth fruit unto God? If these are the results, then you have reason to bless God. None has so great reason to be grateful as you. The Lord has given you a proof of His tenderest love. He has made you a happy man. He has made heaven clearer to you, and deepened in your heart the earnest of your inheritance. He has given you a fresh sealing of His Holy Spirit. He has "ministered to you an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour." Oh, ought you not to be thankful? Only be watchful. Learn from experience how easy it is to fall, how hard it is to rise. "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation."

But perhaps you are one of those who have passed through trial without these results. If so, you are about to enter another and deeper sea of affliction. This *must* be so if God loves you. Perhaps God's hand was once laid upon you. He prostrated you on a bed of sickness. He drew aside for a moment the veil that hid the tomb. You shrank back, and cried out, "Lord if Thou wilt heal me; if Thou wilt spare me this once, I will give my heart to Thee, I will love Thee more, and serve Thee better." Well; He answered your prayer. He raised you up. Where are you now? You have forgotten your resolution. Returning health has banished it from your mind. You have forsaken Christ. You have gone back to the world. You are walking no

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more with Jesus. Oh come back before a sharper stroke be sent, before another thunder-cloud break over your head! Come back to the God who loves you, to the hands and feet you have pierced, to the One you have crucified afresh and put to an open shame! Perhaps that affliction was the voice of the Almighty saying, "Cut it down why cumbereth it the ground," and mercy, in answer to your earnest prayer, stepped between, uplifted its protecting hand to heaven, and cried, "Spare, Lord, this year, till I chastise it and send more warnings to it, and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, Thou shalt cut it down." Oh! come back, make haste, lose no time! Come and cast your backsliding heart on the Saviour. Come and bathe in His precious blood. Come, guilty one, just as thou art, to Him who will never cast any poor wanderer from His presence. Come and "Cast thy burden of sin and iniquity on the Lord and He *shall* sustain thee."

But has the God-forgetting, grace-despising world no burdens? Ah! if believers have their trials, the world is not without them. Trouble is common to man. Every heart has its bitterness. Every tongue has its sad tale to tell. If David had his trials, Saul had far greater ones. If Hezekiah had his, Ahab was not without them. If the believer has his, the ungodly has sometimes to feel God's crushing stroke likewise. They are the heritage of fallen humanity in every shape. He who would be without them must be without sin, and leave a world like this. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." It comes to all, young and old, rich and poor, godly and ungodly alike.

Look at the world in its best garb, and see whether it forms an exception. We are passing through one of the squares in our great metropolis. You see the stream of

carriages drawing up to that noble mansion. The figures step out one by one and enter the spacious hall. It is the ball-room. There is the music, the song, and the dance; the glitter of the gay, the brilliant, and the beautiful, on every side. "Surely," you say, "there is no sorrow there!" Ah! it is a gilded mask! There is the gnawing worm and the broken heart, underneath that beautiful exterior! There lie shrouded, envyings, hatreds, pride and vanity, disappointment and vexation, and all the other miseries of a heart not at peace with God! Yet this is the world in its fairest garb! This is the world's best antidote for a bleeding heart, for stifling the rebukes of conscience, or drowning the deeper sorrows of the soul! And what a spell is there for the youthful heart! Yet what a sad scene! The light step is there, but it treads the way of death. You hear the melodious voice, but there is not a tone in it that can take up the "new song." The garland decks the forehead, but the fetters of sin bind the heart. Beauty stamps the countenance, but the deformity of spiritual death is graven on the soul. What a sickening intermingling! The garland and the fetter, natural beauty and spiritual deformity, outward health and inward death, the midnight revel and the "lake of fire," the brilliance of the gay hall and the blackness of eternal darkness! O world, what a vanity! With what an array of deceptions art thou furnished for ensnaring the heart of man, burdening the soul, but never lightening it, emptying, but never filling it, wounding, but never healing it. Thus the heart is cheated! Thus thy votaries are mocked! Thus the soul is deceived, and, rushing madly forward, grasps the unreal for the real, and prefers thy gilded tinsel to the fairer beauty of Him who is "the chief of ten thousand and the altogether

lovely!" Ah! sinful trifler with eternity, it is not there thou canst ease thy heart of its heavy burden! Thy wound will deepen, but never heal. Thy thorn will only rankle the more, till thou turn and seek rest elsewhere. Rest such as thy agitated spirit seeks is to be found only in Jesus. There is repose for thy aching heart. There is the panacea for thy many bleeding wounds. There is peace that shall allay the stings of a guilty conscience, and rest that shall make thee calm amid the blasts and tempests of a stormy world. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

One word and I close. Reader, you may perhaps be one of those who "care for none of these things." But learn this lesson, God can make you serious. You may jest, or cavil, or sport away life's precious hours in folly and sin, but God can presently make your home desolate and your heart to bleed. The sky all bright to-day shall to-morrow have a cloud that will spread and spread till your horizon is robed in sackcloth. Laugh if you will, but that day is coming. Trifle if you will, but God will one day disturb your folly, and draw the pall of sorrow over your heedless heart. You are sporting on the borders of an abyss into which you may be plunged before nightfall. A slight pressure on the brain, a moment's cessation of the heart's beating, and you are gone to the bar of an offended God! What a solemn thought! Who shall declare the spirit's first interview with its Omnipotent Judge! Reader, think of it.

And what are you losing *now*? I cannot tell you. Go to the dying chamber of some neglecter of salvation and despiser of God's grace. Mark his groans and tears. Mark the throbblings of his heart, and his looks of despair. Hear

him saying, "I heard of salvation, but neglected it. I received warning after warning, but made light of them. I had strivings of the Spirit within me, but stifled them. There is a Saviour, but not for me; He has gone. There is mercy, but not for me; it has gone. They are gone, and I am going, a lost soul to meet an offended God. I die without hope, without heaven, without God. I have sown to the wind, I am about to reap the whirlwind. I have sought the world, but in seeking it I have lost my soul—I *have lost my soul!*" Tear off the mask from the majority of death-beds, and read this, their *true* history. Take warning, reader!—it may be yours. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

"Commit thy way to God,—

The weight which makes thee faint;

Worlds are to Him no load;

To Him breathe thy complaint.

He, who for winds and clouds,

Maketh a pathway free;

Through wastes or hostile crowds,

Can make a way for thee.

"Thou must in Him be blest,

Ere bliss can be secure;

On His work must thou rest,

If thy work shall endure.

To anxious preying thought

And weary fretting care,

The Highest yieldeth nought,

He giveth all to prayer.

“Father! Thy faithful love,
Thy mercy wise and mild,
Sees what will blessing prove,
Or what will hurt Thy child.
And what Thy wise foreseeing,
Doth for Thy children choose,
Thou bringest into being,
Nor sufferest them to lose.

“All means always possessing;
Invincible in might;
Thy doings are all blessing;
Thy goings are all light;
Nothing Thy work suspending;
No foe can make Thee pause.
When Thou, Thine own defending
Dost undertake their cause.

“Hope then, though woes be doubled;
Hope, and be undismayed!
Let not thine heart be troubled,
Nor let it be afraid.
This prison where thou art,
Thy God will break it soon,
And flood with light thy heart,
In His own blessed noon.

“Up! up! the day is breaking!
Say to thy cares ‘Good night,’
Thy troubles from thee shaking,
Like dreams in day’s fresh light.
Thou wearest not the crown,
Nor the best course canst tell;
God sitteth on the throne,
And guideth all things well.

THE BURDEN-BEARER.

"Trust Him to govern then;
No king can rule like Him;
How wilt thou wonder when
Thine eyes no more are dim,
To see those paths which vexed thee,
How wise they were and meet!
The works which now perplex thee,
How beautiful, complete!

"Faithful the love thou sharest;
All, all is well with thee;
The crown from hence thou bearest,
With shouts of victory;
In thy right hand to-morrow,
Thy God shall place the palms;
To Him who chased thy sorrow,
How glad will be thy psalms."*

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

EPHESIANS vi., 10—14.

ST. PAUL had addressed the Church of Ephesus on many important subjects. He had spoken of the believer's calling and election, of his standing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the conduct becoming that standing which was required of him. He next addressed the individual members of that Church, in their several relations to each other of fathers, children, masters, and servants, exhorting each to the consistent fulfilment of those relations. He then concludes his address in the words we have chosen for consideration,—“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” It is the summing up of an earnest and affectionate appeal. As to their heavenly position, and their security connected with it, he begins by placing them “in Christ.” They are “chosen,” “predestinated,” “adopted,” “accepted,” “sealed,” “raised with Christ,” and made “to sit in heavenly places with Christ.” As to their earthly position, he leaves them where Christ left His people—on the battle-field. They are “in armour,” “wrestling,” “withstanding,” and fighting with foes of the most powerful kind, even unto death. Let us endeavour to learn some practical lessons from the passage we have selected; and may they bring forth fruit to the praise of the Saviour's Holy Name.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord." This is the great aim of the Spirit of God—to make men "*strong* in the Lord." In nature, we like to see manliness, strength of body, and intellectual vigour. It was not our Maker's intention that we should always remain children. We were created for a higher end, and childhood is but a step to that end. The type of nature's glory is not the puny, delicate babe in the nurse's arms, requiring constant care and watchfulness; it is the man, strong in all his physical powers and mental faculties, meeting the trials and difficulties of life with the wisdom, strength, and firmness with which God has endowed him. So is it in spiritual things. We are not fulfilling the great end of our redemption, any more than our creation, by remaining in a state of spiritual childhood, needing always milk instead of strong meat; just saved, dwarfish, half-hearted believers. God's delight is to see us strong in His grace, *men* in spiritual might and power. Therefore, it is that, although we may have learned much, and, like the Ephesian Church, be addressed as children, predestinated, accepted, adopted, and made to sit together in heavenly places with Christ, God's "final" message to each one of us, now as then is, "be *strong* in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Thus does the Apostle close his address with what is ever God's message to us. His words are the lingering echoes of the Holy Spirit, still falling upon our world. They are the climax of all His teaching, the fulfilment of that office and work He was sent into our world to accomplish.

"Be strong *in the Lord*." Yes, *there* is the source of all spiritual strength—"in the Lord." Not, let us mark it, strong in what *we* are to Him, but in what *He* is to us.

My faith in Christ, my hope, my sense of security, my love to Him—these may often fail. I may be strong in them to day, and to-morrow weak. There is no confidence to be placed in any of them. To-day I may be on the Mount of Pisgah, to-morrow I may be in the "Slough of Despond." It is not in what *I am to Christ* that I am to be "strong," but in what *Christ is to me*. My faith may fail, nevertheless my covenant is "ordered in all things and sure." My love to Christ may be cold, but Christ's love to me is love "to the end." My sense of security may be gone, nevertheless, "no man can pluck me out of my Father's hand." My hope may take wing and fly away, but it toucheth not my crown and my inheritance on high. Precious thought! As I look at my own spiritual state, what weakness do I see! As I look at Christ, what stability, what firmness, what unchanging grace! This, then, is to be "strong in the Lord." The more we look at Christ, and what He is to us, the stronger will our spiritual graces become, and the brighter will they shine. We grow "strong in the Lord" by looking at Christ, and by remembering that, what He is, we are also. Spiritual weakness is ever the result of a divided eye—half-dwelling on self, and half on Christ. Spiritual strength becomes paralyzed if self find any place for the mind and heart to dwell on. Let us ever remember the source of all strength is "in the Lord."

The next point confirms this. "Put on the whole armour of God." It is *God's* armour the soldier is to wear in his spiritual warfare. We go forth to fight in the full conviction of what God is to us. We clothe ourselves with the armour of *heaven*. From head to foot

there is no room for anything else. It is God's righteousness, God's peace, God's faith, God's Word. It is what is on the believer *from God* that makes him "able to stand against the wiles of the devil." He himself is *hidden*. His eye falls on the armour in which he is covered—on that which is *of God*. In every step of the battle, whether he is "standing" or "withstanding," it is what *God is to him* that he beholds in that armour. This makes him "able." This makes him "*strong* in the Lord." Oh, nothing else will ever do it! The poor, frail, sinful self is *hidden* beneath what is of God. The soldier is in the clefts of the Rock of Ages. There should self ever be out of sight. There should we place it—just where the Apostle placed it in this chapter—hidden beneath what is of God. What *God* is to the believer is the armour that has been tried and found faithful. What *he* is to God is the armour, of which he may say, in the language of David to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." This is the armoury that will stand Satan's fiercest onslaught on the battle-field. Every other will prove unavailing.

But we are exhorted to "put on the *whole* armour of God." Put on a full Christ; this is God's whole armour. Not only His peace, but His unchanging love. Not only His righteousness, but His intercession. Not only His salvation, but the Word of the Living God, which is the pledge of it. What should we think of the soldier going to the battle only half armed? What would be the consequence of such folly? He would be attacked in the very part that was exposed. So with the Christian. Nothing less than a full Christ will avail him. Nothing less than all that is in Him will prove effectual. Satan will enter

and wound just where he is exposed. It must not be half God's armour, and half our own—part looking to Christ, and part to ourselves. It must be an entire "looking off unto Jesus." There must be no dilution of self in the matter, for there is nothing whatever in *us* that "the wiles of the devil" will not take advantage of. Let us look at ourselves as much as we can to discover evil, weakness, and what will make us dissatisfied with ourselves, but let us look at Christ and what He is to us, if we would be strong and victorious in the battle.

But for what purpose is the "whole armour" required? To "stand against the *wiles* of the devil." Mark this! It is the cunning, the craftiness, the subtlety of the devil that is presented as our *first* and greatest foe. It is against the *serpent* that we are to be fore-armed. This has been his name and character from the beginning. We are not so much warned against an open foe as against a secret one. It is the enemy in ambush, or the hook under the gilded bait. Satan knows right well that to tempt the child of God openly would fail. Open sin, or glaring iniquity, or avowed infidelity, would not succeed. But if he can mingle truth with error, and gild inconsistency with charity, then is his end gained. Thus *has* he acted in all ages. He said not to Eve "God is a liar; ye shall not die." No, but "*hath* God said ye shall surely die?" This is what he was at the beginning, and what he has been ever since. If we look at the history of the falls of God's people as recorded in the Bible, we shall find that they were overcome almost in every instance by the craft and subtlety of Satan, rather than by any open temptation. Abraham, David, Hezekiah, Peter, are all of them instances of this. And if we trace their history since then, we find the same

thing. Satan has gained the advantage by "wiles," by cunning and craftiness. Thus have they fallen, rather than by open and sudden plunges into iniquity. This has been the history of individual failure, as well as collective failure. Little by little has evil entered the heart, for only thus could it succeed. Little by little, and often unconsciously, has the believer fallen, and also the Church. And why? In the midst the deceiver has been secretly waiting, and watching, and working, and turning all man's weakness and failure to his own advantage. Therefore it is that we are first warned against his "wiles." Therefore it is that, even if we had to meet Satan in no other shape or form, we should need the "*whole* armour of God" to meet him in this. And by thus requiring the "*whole* armour of God," we learn that none but Christ is equal to the combat.

But notice how terrible is the foe we have to deal with, and what a *close* conflict the believer is engaged in. "For we *wrestle* not against flesh and blood, but against *principalities* and *powers*." We may also observe in these words a confirmation of our previous remarks. The believer is said to "wrestle" with Satan. The Apostle borrows the figure from the "wrestling" games which were then so fashionable, and the favourite sources of amusement. What was the great object of the wrestler? Not to deal an open blow; not to *slay* his adversary, but to *trip him up unawares*. So with Satan. His object is not to slay the Christian, in other words to deprive him of eternal life. This he cannot do. He knows he cannot. "No man," saith the Lord, "can pluck them out of my hand." His great object is to trip them up unawares, and thus to expose their weakness and folly to a deriding world, ever on the alert to mark the inconsistencies of

God's people, and to rejoice in their fall. The Christian's great danger is a trip up, a stumble unawares, a fall unexpected. This again is the reason for "the *whole* armour of God," for with a foe so powerful, so subtle, and so *close* upon him, nothing short of this can save him.

Another feature of his enemy is described in the following words—"against the rulers of the darkness of this world." As these foes rule over the wicked, so do they wrestle in the dark. The believer, though himself "light in the Lord," is in the midst of this darkness. What advantage has a man in a dark room full of armed foes? None whatever. Such is the believer's position in this world. He sees not the number of his foes, nor the many weapons which lie on every side of him. He is like a man in the dark with regard to them. Hence, again, his need of "the *whole* armour of God."

Another feature of the Christian's foes is described in the next clause, "against spiritual wickedness in high places;" or, according to the more correct marginal rendering, "against wicked spirits in heavenly places." Here we have more particularly brought before us the *sphere* of their action, namely, "in *heavenly* places." What places are these? Not in heaven itself, though this *may* be true, since Satan is represented as being in heaven, "accusing the brethren day and night before God." This, however, is probably not the meaning here. The heavenly places are on earth. Prayer is a heavenly place. The reading of God's Word, and meditation is a heavenly place. The meeting for worship in God's house is a heavenly place. These and many other such, are the "heavenly places" referred to. Here the wicked spirits congregate and exert all their strength. And how often does the child of God feel

their power. When engaged in prayer or reading of the Word, what vagrancy of thought, what intrusion of worldly, if not sinful thoughts, what coldness and deadness, how much unpraying prayer, how much of the dead letter in the Word. And it would seem as if this had not been the case till that very moment, when, above all other times we desire to have the mind free and calm for refreshing communion with our Heavenly Father—at that very moment we experience these sinful intruders invading the heavenly domain, spoiling our communion, hindering our blessing, and making us unhappy. “Oh!” said one of God’s holy ones, “sometimes it seems when I am about to engage in prayer, as if a torrent of unholy thoughts just at that moment rushed into my mind like a flood, to which, at all other times during the day, I had been a comparative stranger.” Is not this often the experience of God’s people? And to what influence are we to attribute this? To “the wicked spirits in heavenly places,” intruding, disturbing, and making the whole soul miserable. “Wherefore,” says the Apostle a second time, “take unto you the *whole* armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.” In all such attacks, remember what God is to you. *Use* His armour. Does Satan charge with sin? Remember His precious blood laid to your credit against it. Do sinful, or worldly thoughts intrude on your sacred moments and discourage you? Remember His prevailing merits and intercession which render all your prayers and praises acceptable to God, yea, “as the odour of a sweet smelling savour.” Is it a sense of guilt that disturbs you, a trembling conviction of your own unworthiness, and the love of God not fully realized? Remember Him, who has *made* your peace with

God, and that nothing can unsettle. Remember His love that continues to the end, unchanged by all your doubts, and fears, and undeservings. Thus use God's armour—God's love, God's righteousness, God's peace, God's Word. These are *yours*, though your dim faith may not at all times see them. Who shall unbind God's armour from the weakest soul? Not the devil, not wicked spirits, not worldly thoughts, not sinful imaginations—unholy intruders on the heart; “not life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature,” shall be able to separate, unbind, or loosen, God's armour from you. Put it on then. Use it. Trust that armour, for it will never fail you. It will make you “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” The more you look at what Christ is for you, the more will you triumph over your foes, and be stronger than all that is against you.

And mark how the closing words of the Apostle confirm these remarks, “*Take* unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.” He seems to confirm all that we have previously stated. “Take unto you” what is yours; what God has provided for you. What God *is* for you, *take* and use it for your comfort, and strength, and victory. Thus does he confirm the blessed truth that it is what God is for us, we are to look to and live upon.

Nor is the soldier to put off his armour when the conflict is over. When temptation has been met and overcome in the strength of the Lord, still the armour is to be worn; still the soldier is “to stand.” No putting off the armour. No lying down on the battle field. No *rest* on earth. The laurels are to be won here, but worn in heaven. The

crown is to be gained here, but to glitter on the brow among the redeemed in glory. The *conflict* to the very end of our pilgrimage journey; the rest in our Father's house on high. "Having done all," then let us "stand." Scarcely have we done with one foe than another has to be met in a more subtle form. If the armour be laid aside for a moment, that moment is the foe upon us. Every step of the road, till we reach the hill of Zion, is the battle field, and the thickest of the fight when the threshold that leads to everlasting rest is in view.

Reader, let me ask, are you "in the Lord?" I do not ask, are you "*strong* in the Lord?" That would be superfluous if you are not yet "*in* the Lord." I ask first, are you "*in* the Lord;" savingly in Him? Are you redeemed by the blood of Jesus? Have you altogether forsaken *yourself* to take refuge in Christ? Do you love Him? Do you long to be more like Him? Are you a Christian in *heart* as well as in the *head*? Are you, reader, *in* the Lord? If not, you know of no inward spiritual foes. You know of no hidden corruptions to mourn over. You know nothing of the unutterable preciousness of the blood of Christ. You know nothing of God's armour. And worse than all, you will have no laurels, no crown of glory, no "well done, good and faithful servant," when the journey of life is over. Oh, *your* end will not be the conqueror's, with its songs of triumph, but that of the enemies of the Lord,—"*shame, and everlasting contempt.*" Reader, again I ask, are you among the Lord's conquerors, or among those of whom it is said, "*in that day, the slain of the Lord shall be many?*"

Christian reader, "*be strong in the Lord.*" Grow in grace. Aim higher each day you live. Lose not sight of the powerful, subtle foe at your side. Trust God's armour.

Look from self to Jesus. You are as weak as the trembling reed or the smoking flax, never weaker than when you think yourself strongest. Oh, lean on Jesus! Let the eye be ever upward. Let the aim be ever onward. Let the armour be ever on you. Then will you be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

Oft in sorrow, oft in woe,
Onward, Christian, onward go;
Fight the fight, maintain the strife,
Strengthen'd with the bread of life!

Let your drooping heart be glad;
March in heavenly armour clad:
Fight, nor think the battle long,
Soon shall vict'ry tune your song!

Let not sorrow dim your eye,
Soon shall ev'ry tear be dry;
Let not fears your course impede,
Great your strength, if great your need!

Onward then in battle move,
More than conqu'ror you shall prove
Though opposed by many a foe,
Onward, Christian, onward go!

NOW AND HEREAFTER :

OR,

THE BELIEVER AS HE IS, AND AS HE SHALL BE.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

THE relation the present dispensation bears to the future one is similar to the relation that night bears to day. The present is one of comparative darkness, for "now," says the Apostle, "we see through a glass darkly." It is a universal law both in nature and grace. It is written as with a sunbeam on everything around us. In our minutest examinations, in our deepest researches, in our loftiest conceptions, there is a point beyond which we cannot go. We scale some lofty height in our gropings after knowledge, and bring to light some undiscovered fact in nature, but we marvel to behold in the dim distance, truths, baffling the profoundest skill, and with which the mind of man, in its present state, is unable to grapple. This is the result of our utmost efforts. There ambition, perseverance, and skill, are compelled to pause and listen to the voice of the Omnipotent exclaiming, "Thus far shalt thou go but no farther," and man retires from the contest with the conviction deeply written on his heart "now I know but in part."

Thus spoke one of the world's noblest philosophers, when he had solved one of the greatest problems of nature, the

law of gravitation, "I am but like a child gathering shells and pebbles round the sea-shore that is just kissed by the waves, while the great unsounded depths of the mighty ocean lie unapproachable beyond me." And Sir Isaac Newton's language is only the echo of the Divine testimony, "Now we see through a glass darkly. Now I know but in part." The Lord Himself confirms this. "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light. The *night* cometh when no man can work." The passage we have selected for consideration also confirms this. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is the time of darkness. We see things at best very dimly. What the night is to the day, so is the present to the future. We have the moon and stars only, not the glorious shining of the sun. But what is their light? It is only borrowed. It is all the reflection of the sun. So is it morally and spiritually. All the light we now possess is but the reflection from Divine revelation. Dim as it is, it is all due to Christ the Sun of Righteousness. The philosophers of this world, in their pride and presumption, little think of this. All the light they possess, and all they have ever discovered by its means, they owe to the glorious rays of Divine revelation. It is, however, only the light of the night-season. It is not the day. For that we wait, when it shall be proclaimed to this dark world, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

This is the prominent idea in the passage we are about to consider. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." There is one great truth at its opening on which everything else depends, namely, "Now are we the

sons of God." The glory of the coming kingdom is for them. The confident expectation, the assurance of faith, the joy of the promise, all belongs to them. The Lord's promises are the inheritance of His people. They are a strange language to all others. Their vocabulary is one the world cannot understand. The key to their interpretation lies in the answer to the question, "Am I a son of God?" If they appear foolishness to you, no wonder. There is many a sentence and many a word in a father's letter that none can enter into, but his own child. That child can understand their meaning, for it understands the father's heart, and is in possession of his love. So with God's children. They clasp these words to their hearts as "exceeding great and precious promises." And if you want to know the reason, we tell you there is a secret between them, which you are not in possession of, and which is the key to your question. They are the sons of God. They know their Heavenly Father, and He knows them. They love Him too, because He loves them. Each word of His contains a mystic meaning. It touches a chord in their hearts which vibrates. It is a vehicle freighted with His love which draws their hearts closer to Him; cements the secret bond between them; and makes all His words sweet to their taste, yea, "sweeter than honey from the honeycomb." Ask yourself the question, then, "Am I a son of God? Am I in possession of this happy secret? Are the Lord's promises the precious food of my soul?" If you can answer these questions satisfactorily, then all that follows is yours.

But what does the term "son of God" more particularly mean? It implies three things—relationship, family likeness, and heirship. They who are such are "born again" "not

of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Just as by natural birth they partook of the nature of their earthly parents, so by this new birth, do they partake of the nature of their Heavenly Father. As to the family likeness also, though no children are exactly like their parents, yet is there *some* likeness. So is it with them. Their Heavenly Father is gracious, merciful, gentle, forbearing, and forgiving; so are they, in measure. He is holy, so are they, for the holiness of Christ is upon them, and they reflect it in measure in their lives. As to their heirship, also; as He is a King and a Priest on His throne, so are they "kings and priests unto God," and soon to sit upon their throne. They have "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." They are "heirs and joint heirs with Christ." Such are the "sons of God." They have a new heart, a new character, a new inheritance. It is true that there is still much of the old nature cleaving to them. There are many indwelling corruptions, many blots, and scars, and shadows of the world upon them, yet is there "the *treasure* in the *earthen* vessel." It is not *all* darkness as it used to be. "He who commanded the light in the beginning to shine out of darkness, hath shined in their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus."

But there is one important little word here, which we must not pass over, for it is all-important. "*Now* are we the sons of God." "Now!" What a solemn little word! How much hangs upon it! How it will tell on the future! "Now," this present moment, just as I am—nothing changed, nothing added, nothing taken away—"now I am a son of God." Not, "I *trust* I

am one." Not, "I *hope to become* one." Not, "I may *hereafter* be one." No, but "now," this present moment, I am one. The Bible knows of no "hoping," or "trusting," or "hereafter" in the matter of the soul's salvation. None. It is "now" or nothing. It is "now," I am either the one thing or the other. "Now," I am a son of God, or a child of Satan. "Now," I am either saved or lost. Reader, which is it in *your* case?

"Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God." What a great privilege! What an exalted position! What a noble descent! Whose is this privilege? Is it that of a few? Is it confined to the ascetic, the recluse, the saint's closet, or the hermit's cell? Nay, it is the privilege of every child of God, whether rich or poor, weak in faith or strong; born into the family of God only yesterday, or with the spiritual locks of threescore years and ten; the pauper in his hovel, or the king in his palace,—all are "sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Poor, trembling disciple, writing hard things of thyself, smiting upon thy breast, and subscribing thyself "less than the least of all saints"—*thou* art this "son of God!" Think not you are *to try to become one*. You are one "*now*." Just as you are, nothing taken away from your heart, and nothing added to it, "*now*" thou art a "son of God." This is God's Word, and not man's.

But what enabled the Apostle to say this? "Peculiar sanctity?" "Extraordinary attainment?" No, nothing of the kind. No Romish works of supererogation here. Mar not the heavenly picture with such vain notions. What, then, enabled him to say it? Whence did he derive this Divine assurance? From the words of the previous verse, "Behold what manner of love the Father *hath* bestowed

upon us." He simply *believed God's Word about the love of Christ*. Nothing more. Marvel not at this! This is all God asks any man to believe. This is the message that rings in the ear, in ten thousand different forms, on every side. This is what God sent His Son into the world to declare. This is the meaning of a suffering, bleeding, dying Saviour. It is only the man who can say "God loves me," that can also say, "*now* I am a son of God." The man who is not sure that God loves him can never say this. I do not say that you are not a Christian if you cannot say this. Surely you may be! There is many a true Christian who can say, "I love my Saviour," who would, nevertheless, shrink from saying, "I know that God loves me;" "I know that I am now a son of God." All they can say, is, "I hope I am one;" or, "I trust I may be one." But why can you not say with the Apostle, "Now I am a son of God?" Simply because you cannot say, "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon *me*." This is the reason you have no *abiding* peace or joy in your soul. You have no certainty, no confidence. One day you are happy, another day you are miserable; and all this because you do not believe what God says; you do not believe His love to you. It is only when your soul grasps firmly this blessed truth, that you can ever have *continued* peace. Now, your happiness is like the waves of the sea, in constant motion, ebbing and flowing; here to-day and gone to-morrow. So will this state of things continue till you believe God's love to you. What will draw a child to its parent, restore its confidence, make it happy, obedient, and dutiful? The assurance of its parent's love. Nothing else. So is it with the Christian. He loves Christ. Well, but that will not give him abiding

peace and confidence. What he still needs to believe is God's love *to him*. The one will give salvation; the other will give him the enjoyment of salvation. *Our* love to Christ will take us to heaven, but the assurance of *God's* love to us will bring very much of heaven down here. It is the unbelief of this love that makes so many never get beyond, "I hope," "I trust;" a dubious uncertain state, in which multitudes seem content to remain all their lives.

This leads us to mark the distinction in the Bible between *God's* love to us, and *our* love to God, and the sense in which each is used. Wherever *God's* love to the believer is mentioned, it is generally connected with the *assurance* of salvation and its effects,—confidence, peace, and joy. On the other hand, when the *believer's* love to Christ is mentioned, it is in connection with the salvation of the soul. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" that is, from Christ's love to us. "The love of Christ constraineth us;" that is, Christ's love to us. "Keep yourselves in the love of God;" that is, in the love of God to us. In all these places it is employed to give confidence, stability, and comfort to the believer. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Here it is our love to Christ that is spoken of, and it is connected with the salvation of the soul. This distinction is very marked in the Bible, and the reason is obvious; God's desire is not only to give us salvation, but the assurance of that salvation; not only to save us, but to make us happy. It is His desire that we should have "confidence and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Let us mark, too, the confidence this knowledge of God's love gave to the Apostle, as to the future. He looks forward to the coming of the great day of God with joy.

He says, "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Nothing but the knowledge of God's unchanging love, will ever give you confidence in the hour of death, or boldness in the day of judgment. But the man who knows and believes God's love to him can say, "the pillars of the earth may be removed; the universe may be folded up like a scroll; the elements may melt with fervent heat; but I will rejoice in the Lord. I shall see Him in that day, and shall be like Him." "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world."

Reader, rest satisfied with nothing short of this appropriation of God's unchanging love to you. It is God's free gift to you in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only this that will give you calmness, and peace, and joy. It is only this that will make you superior to all the changes and chances of this mortal life. It is only this that will keep your soul as an anchor, when everything is shifting beneath you. Human affection may change, fond faces be removed, alien looks may meet you on every side, that you fondly thought you could once have trusted, and all may change; but here you have a hidden treasure, a love that changes not, that passeth knowledge, and that will amply compensate for all the changes in human life. Oh believe this love! Clasp it to your heart as your choicest blessing. Lean upon it with all your strength, and you will then know its blessed power.

Let us pass on to the next clause. "It doth not yet *appear* what we shall be." The Lord's people are not yet manifest as they shall be. They are a hidden people. Their life is "hid with Christ." Their nutriment is hidden

man. The sources of their joy, the causes of their sorrow, the elements of their peace, the secret of their victory, are all things that the world neither understands nor appreciates.

But not only what they are, but what they will be, is hidden. The Christian on earth is not what he shall be. He is not the poor foolish being men take him for. He is a king and a priest. He is not a denizen of earth, although he appears to be. He is an heir of heaven and a King's son. He is clothed with the righteousness of God, and soon to shine in that spotless garment in the courts of heaven. This is the law of our nature. The tree in winter is not what it appears to be—dead: it is what it appears not—alive. It contains within itself the sap and life and fruitfulness of summer; and awaits the coming spring, when it shall display its hidden life to every eye. So with the child of God. Who could conceive what he is or will be? The world's mighty ones are shining in splendour now, but his time has yet to come. They have their pleasures now, but his are coming. His treasure is in heaven. His crown of gold, his royal robes, his golden harp, they are all to come. His kingdom is at hand. His sun is about to rise; and he looks forward with earnest expectation to the hour that shall usher in his everlasting Jubilee, that shall dry every tear, banish every sorrow, erase every dark stain of sin, and make him forget that he has been a stranger and a pilgrim on earth. Beyond the troubles of the hour, and the storm that he knows shall wreck the world, he looks forward to the kingdom that cannot be moved. Beyond the shadows of sin and death and the grave, he looks forward to the "tree of life," and the

green pastures in the midst of the paradise of God. Jesus is his inheritance now and his hope hereafter. Jesus is his "all in all." "What manner of love," he says, "has the Father bestowed upon me, that *I* should be called a son of God." "Now I am a son of God, and although it doth not yet appear what I shall be, I know that when He shall appear, I shall be like Him, for I shall see Him as He is."

What a comfort amid all the indwelling corruptions and infirmities and weaknesses of this sinful body are these precious, precious words, "we shall be like *Him*!" When the poor frail tenement has been pressed down beneath a weight of diseases, the aching head, the sunken cheek, the wasted frame, the fevered pulse, the lingering agony—Oh the preciousness of the thought at that moment of soon being like Jesus! When the temper has been ruffled, when the infirmity of the flesh has gained the mastery, when the feet have wandered from the right path, when sin has gotten the victory, and Satan has for a moment triumphed—Oh the thought of soon leaving for ever a sinful body and being like Jesus! When we have bent over the sick bed and watched night after night by the side of all that makes earth dear to us, and have seen pulse failing, memory failing, voice failing, and have watched the eyelids close in death; when we have bent for the last time over the remains, now fast turning to corruption and decay; when the tears have fallen thickly over the coffin and the tomb, and we have returned to our desolate home, and the vacant chair, the empty corner, or the unused toy, has brought the scalding tear back to the eye; O say, child of God, has not the thought of soon meeting that beloved one in the likeness of Jesus been most precious to you? Yet this is no flight of imagination, no fancy of a diseased brain, but

the truth of God, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Yes, that same body that was committed to its silent resting-place amid the tears and farewells of severed affection, shall soon come forth at the sound of the Archangel's trump, to shine in the likeness of Jesus. Whether beneath the marble monument, or the depths of the sea, or scattered with the dust of the desert, it shall arise from its resting-place, clad in robes of immortality and glory. That smile that once gladdened your heart shall again be seen, that voice whose tones were so musical to your ear that their echoes seem still to be ringing in your path, shall again be heard. We shall clasp that hand again. We shall press those lips again. We shall hear that voice again in yet more musical reverberations. Our beloved one shall walk hand in hand with us under a brighter sky, and in a happier clime. The wife, the husband, the brother, the sister, the mother, the child—all shall meet again in warmer embraces than earth has ever known, and where a farewell shall never more be heard. The morning of resurrection shall give back the treasures of which death has robbed us here; and, like "morn's million drops of dew," they shall sparkle with the hues of the Sun of Righteousness; they shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is. Like Him in holiness. Like Him in love. Like Him in beauty. Like Him in glory. Like Him without a wrinkle to mar, without a sin to stain, without a sorrow to cloud, and be for ever happy because for ever with the Lord.

"Soon where earthly beauty blinds not,
No excess of brilliance palls,
Salem, city of the holy,
We shall be within thy walls.

There beside life's crystal river,
There beneath life's healing tree,
There with nought to cloud or sever,
Ever with the Lamb to be.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me.

Let us now look at one or two features in the last clause of this precious verse.

"We shall be like Him *for* we shall see Him as He is." The transforming medium, we may notice here, is the eye. By none of the senses is the heart more quickly, or more powerfully affected than by it. And what affects the heart most deeply, leaves its impression on the countenance. The more striking the object presented to the eye, the more powerfully will the heart be affected, and the more rapid the assimilation to the object by which it is so deeply influenced. Human character is formed by impressions made on the mind and heart from external influences, and the countenance becomes, in some measure, the exponent of the character. This is true spiritually as well as naturally, and serves to explain the passage referred to. The eye of the glorified believer will gaze upon a glorified Saviour. This Object, so striking, will produce a powerful impression on the purified heart, and this will produce a corresponding effect on the countenance—a rapid assimilation to the Object by which it is so powerfully influenced. We can thus understand, even on natural principles, how, when we see the Saviour we shall be like Him. It is the same figure that is used by St. Paul to express the medium of our spiritual transformation now. "*We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of*

the Lord." The character is changed through the medium of the *eye* of faith, and the individual becomes like the Object by which it is influenced. Again, the same Apostle says in another place, "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking* unto Jesus." As it is in nature, so is it in grace, and so will it be in glory. "We shall be like Him, *for* we shall see Him as He is." Those who are sons of God see Christ now with the spiritual eye, and thus their characters become, in some measure, like His. The *assimilation* to Him now is just in proportion to the clearness with which Jesus is seen with the eye of faith. It is the same principle that will produce the likeness hereafter, for the future transformation will be only the full development of what is now going on in the soul. The only change will be from faith to sight, the clearing away of everything that now dims the spiritual vision of the believer in Jesus.

Oh, the blessedness of having our dim vision cleared, and seeing the Saviour "as He is!" What false views we often have of Him now! How low, how unbelieving, how cold are our best thoughts of Him! How fleeting the moments when we get with the eye of faith, a view of Christ "as He is!" Our joy, how soon it is damped; our peace, how soon it is clouded; our love, how soon it is cooled; our sweet moments in prayer, how checked, how hindered; our happiness in Christ, how transient and quickly fading! Why is all this? It is because we see so little of Him "as He is." Oh, if we only saw Him "as He is," how would all our hard, unbelieving thoughts of Him vanish! How should we blush that we had ever so dishonoured Him! How should we be ashamed of our lukewarmness and apathy! And is

it not a blessed thought, that soon every cloud shall vanish, every doubt shall be removed, the dim vision for ever be gone, and we shall bask before the throne in the full sunshine of His love!

Child of God, how often the full sense of that love has dawned upon you; how often has your heart throbbed under its view; how often your feeble faith would have grasped that fleeting moment, and you have said with Peter on the Mount, "Lord, it is good for me to be here." But the cloud of unbelief has come over your horizon, and left you again in darkness. What was it? It was just a glimpse of Christ "as He is." Just now, it shall be yours for ever.

How often you have felt prayer precious. It seemed for a moment as if you were clasped in the bosom of the Saviour, and you have inwardly breathed, "Oh, that I could stay here! Perishing things of time and sense and sin, pass for ever away from my heart, and leave me alone with Jesus!" But it passed away like the breath of even, and you felt again the chilling atmosphere of the world creeping over your heart. What was it? It was a glimpse of Jesus "as He is." Just now, it shall be yours for ever.

How often you have held sweet communion with those you loved, about your Saviour. Your heart has burned within you as He revealed Himself to you, and you have felt, "Oh, that I could have such fellowship for ever!" Ah! you had to part, and tread again the rough paths of the world, with none to hold communion with you in the things of God. No sympathy with your heart breathings; no blending of spirit with spirit; no interchange of thought and affection. Oh, these barriers to unhindered communion, these glimpses, few and far between, of your

Beloved, these snatches of the heavenly harmony, when shall they end in eternal intercourse with Jesus! Yet a little while, and all this shall cease. These precious glimpses shall end, and communion with the Lord, eye to eye, and face to face, shall be yours for ever. Yes, you shall "see Him as He is, and be like Him." Then shall "the former things be passed away, and God shall make all things new." No death Sunderings there; no disease wastings there; no sorrow chafings there; no disappointments there; no tears there—not one shall ever cross the threshold of its pearly gates. The eye shall be bright, the heart shall be pure, the mind shall be calm, the body shall be glorious, and the soul be for ever at rest! This is the joy that is set before us; this is the kingdom that cannot be moved; this is the inheritance of the saints; this is the city of the jasper walls, the beautiful, the true.

For this we wait, and watch, and pray. And the time is at hand. A few more severed bonds, and then shall all the scattered members of the family be knit together in one eternal brotherhood. A few more suns shall rise and set, and then "shall arise the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings," never again to descend. How comforting to the tried and tempted, the suffering and sorrowing, the weary and heavy-laden travellers to Zion, to think that the resting-place is so near, and that resting-place, the Father's house, where we shall go no more out; where "the Father's Name shall be written upon our foreheads;" where "nothing that defileth can enter;" where "we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; where the sun shall not light upon us nor any heat, and where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes!" Blessed morning! Glorious anticipation!

Reader, are you a child of that day? Will *you* see Christ

then and be like Him? Have you seen Him *now*? If so, what effect has it had on you? Is it transforming you into the likeness of His character? How are you living each day here? Are you living so as to please the Lord? Are you striving to glorify Christ? Is this your great aim in the expenditure of money, of time, and opportunities? Are you *growing* in grace? Do the duties of each day find you watchful? Are your tempers watched? Are your lips guarded? Are your supreme affections on Christ? Is the throne of grace often visited? Is the Bible delighted in? Is sin bitter? Is holiness sweet? Oh! reader, what are these questions to *you*? Answer them to-day. Answer them before God. Live for Christ. This is a dying world, and there is nothing else worth living for in it. Live then for heaven, and let people see you living. Then "when He shall appear, you shall be like Him, for you shall see Him as He is," and be "for ever with the Lord."

Reader, if you have never seen Christ now in *grace*, you will see Him just now in *judgment*. You *must* meet God. You *shall* see Him eye to eye and face to face. You cannot put off *that* meeting. You are sowing to the flesh, you *will* have to reap its fruits. You are sowing to the wind, you *must* reap the whirlwind. It is written, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that *shall* he also reap." Put God off if you will, but the reckoning is at hand. Above you the sword of justice is suspended by a thread; behind you is a life of guilt following you to the bar of God; before you are the flames of unquenchable fire; beneath you rolls the blackness of eternal darkness: and yet see how you are *living* day by day! You carry about a feeble body. You know not what a day may bring forth. The next pang that shoots through your frame may be the

messenger of death. The next breath you draw may sap the secret springs of the frail tenement, and you may be summoned to appear before God—yet see how you *live*! You are bartering your soul, you are provoking God, you are heaping up vengeance, you are forming daily and hourly a deeper hell for your soul—yet see how you *live*! Again I warn you in my Master's Name to “flee from the wrath to come.” Again I beseech you to be “reconciled to God.” Again I implore you to come to Jesus and find rest for your soul. But come soon. Put not off the day of grace. The day of wrath is at hand. If it overtake you amid the sounds of warnings and entreaties slighted, great will be your condemnation. “*Now* is the accepted time.” “*Now* is the day of salvation.” If you are ever to enter heaven hereafter, you must have something of heaven in your heart now. If you are ever to be like Christ hereafter you must have His image now. God's gracious message still sounds in your ears, “him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” Sinner, hear it and “come.”

Reader, there can be no uncertainty whose you are, or where you are going. There can be no uncertainty either in your own mind, or in the minds of others. Let me in closing give you a test—“If I live on as I lived last week, last month, last year, where will it land me? Is heaven clear before me, or is it dark? Is heaven clear before me, or hell? Which? Put that question home to your conscience without shrinking—fairly, honestly, and in the sight of God; and you can make no mistake—can you? Which, reader, *which*?

Where the faded flower shall freshen—
Freshen never more to fade;

Where the shaded sky shall brighten—
Brighten never more to shade ;
Where the sun-blaze never scorches ;
Where the star-beams cease to chill ;
Where no tempest stirs the echoes
Of the wood, or wave, or hill !
Where the morn shall wake in gladness,
And the noon, the joy prolong ;
Where the day-light dies in fragrance,
'Mid the burst of holy song :
Brother, we shall meet and rest
'Mid the holy and the blest !

Where no shadow shall bewilder ;
Where life's vain parade is o'er ;
Where the sleep of sin is broken,
And the dreamer dreams no more ;
Where the bond is never sever'd—
Partings, claspings, sob and moan—
Midnight waking, twilight weeping,
Heavy noontide—all are done ;
Where the child has found its mother ;
Where the mother finds the child ;
Where dear families are gather'd,
That were scatter'd o'er the wild :
Brother, we shall meet and rest
'Mid the holy and the blest !

Where the hidden wound is healed ;
Where the blighted life re-blooms ;
Where the smitten heart, the freshness
Of its buoyant youth resumes ;
Where the love that here we lavish
On the withering leaves of time,
Shall have fadeless flowers to fix on
In an ever spring-bright clime ;
Where we find the joy of loving,
As we never loved before—

Loving on, unchill'd, unhinder'd—
Loving once and evermore :
Brother, we shall meet and rest
'Mid the holy and the blest !

Where a blasted world shall brighten,
Underneath a bluer sphere,
And a softer, gentler sunshine
Shed its healing splendour here ;
Where earth's barren vales shall blossom,
Putting on their robes of green,
And a purer, fairer Eden
Be where only wastes have been ;
Where a King in kingly glory,
Such as earth has never known,
Shall assume the righteous sceptre,
Claim and wear the holy crown :
Brother, we shall meet and rest
'Mid the holy and the blest ! *

* Rev. H. Bonar, D.D.

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